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**WILD COUNTRY HALL:
CHILDREN'S LEARNING AT A RESIDENTIAL
OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE**

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**Wild Country Hall: Children's learning at a residential outdoor
education centre.**

by

ANTHONY THOMAS REA

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Faculty of Education

Abstract.

Anthony Thomas Rea

Wild Country Hall: Children's learning at a residential outdoor education centre.

This thesis is about learning at a residential outdoor education centre [pseudonym:- Wild County Hall]. It poses and answers three questions:

- How useful might discursive positioning be as a perspective on learning?
- What are the discourses at Wild Country Hall and how are they different to schooling discourses?
- How might neo-Liberal discursive practices, including performativity, and current schooling orthodoxies have affected the pedagogic practices at this centre?

The review of literature provides an overview of the key literature on outdoor, adventure and experiential learning, considering these through the lenses of learning as acquisition, participation and transformation, before discussing the literature on the discursive positioning of identity. Literature on the discursive practices of outdoor centres is then considered in relation to literature on neo-Liberalism and performativity in schools.

The methodology is ethnographic. Participant observations were conducted over a period of five years whilst children were participating in both the organised adventure activities and the residential life of the centre. Searches of the centre's documentary archives, and follow up interviews with 22 children (aged eight to 11) and three adults were used to add richness to the observational data, and especially to better understand reported participant gains. Analysis was undertaken by coding themes in the data using QSR NVivo N6.

The findings suggest that acquisitional and participatory perspectives on learning are not totally adequate for explaining the reported changes in outlook and behaviour of the children who took part in the research. These benefits may be more usefully

conceptualised as discursively re-positioned identity. It is suggested that the perspective on learning as discursive positioning may be usefully employed by those studying residential outdoor education in the future. The findings show a number of over-arching discourses that dominate the life of Wild Country Hall. These include place - including the appreciation, care of and respect for nature, the sense of awe and wonder, understanding and protecting the environment – risk, challenge and adventure; and consequent confidence and resilience building by children through facing and over-coming their fears. Whilst some of these fears are linked to the adventure activities of the centre (such as fears of heights, water), other fears are associated with the residential nature of the centre; encountering and coping with homesickness, living with new people, encountering strange customs and unfamiliar social practices. So important were these unfamiliar discourses to the participating children that they may be looked upon as 'rites of passage'. The findings suggest that encountering unfamiliar discourses may explain the efficacy of learning at Wild Country Hall.

Some of the pedagogic practices at Wild Country Hall were found to valorise what may be described as 'classroom discourses', and these have tended to formalise learning at the centre. It is suggested, therefore, that this outdoor centre has been influenced by performativity and classroom orthodoxy, themselves shaped by neo-Liberal agenda. These influences may be narrowing the range of discourses available and limiting the centre's continuing ability to provide unfamiliar discourses, possibly to the detriment of children's learning.

The conclusion makes a number of recommendations for policy practice and research. Recommendations for policy and practice focus on the narrowing tendencies observed at this centre, suggesting shifts in policy to retain the distinctiveness of outdoor education centres. Recommendations for research suggest that follow-up studies would be useful to test the findings in other outdoor centres and other areas of learning, whilst more methodological work could be done on memory and data research sites where contemporaneous notation and digital recording may be difficult or impossible.

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Author's declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

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Rea, T (2008) Is the neo-Liberal agenda in education formalising the informal? Paper presented at the European Conference for Outdoor Education, Trinity College, Carmarthen.

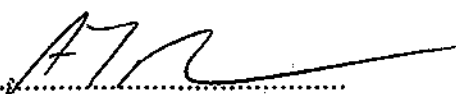
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Contents.

Wild Country Hall. Children's learning at a residential outdoor education centre.	2
Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	5
Author's declaration	6
Contents	8
List of Tables	11
List of Figures	1
Chapter 1 Introduction: outdoor learning and residential outdoor centres	12
1 1 My fight against familiarity	12
1 2 The social construction of learning	18
1 3 Learning as discursive positioning	23
1 4 The 'colonisation' of the practices of outdoor centres.	28
1 5 Methodology.	29
1 6 Myself in the research	30
1 7 Implications of the research for policy	34
1 8 Outdoor, adventure and experiential learning and education a clarification of terms	35
1 9 The current position of Local Authority maintained outdoor Learning in England. . .	39
1 10 Background information about the schools	41
1 11 Summary	46
Chapter 2 Outdoor learning: theory and perspectives [or lenses]	48
2 1 Introduction	48
2 2 Perspectives on outdoor learning	50
2 2 1 The experiential learning lens	53
2 2 2 Outdoor learning as acquisition	57
2 2 3 Impact studies and acquisition.	60
2 2 4 The acquisition, or development, of enhanced self concept	62
2 2 5 Problems with the acquisitional lenses on outdoor learning	66
2 2 5 Socio cultural perspectives on outdoor learning.	73
2 2 6 The learning as transformation lens	73
2 2 7 The learning as participation lens	75
2 3 Outdoor learning as discursive positioning	79
2 4 Situating my work within this literature.	86
Chapter 3 The discursive practices of outdoor centres and schools, and discourses of childhood	88
3 1 The discursive practices of outdoor centres	88
3 1 1 The discourse of place as 'the great outdoors'	88
3 1 2 Risk, challenge and adventure	91
3 1 3 Homesickness and residential experience	95

3.2 The discursive practices of schools: performativity in schools and classrooms influenced by neo-Liberalism.	101
3.2.1 School and classroom orthodoxies.	102
3.2.2 Performativity a technology of control: how outdoor centres are becoming increasingly the subjects of control.	104
3.2.3 Performativity, teaching and learning.	105
3.2.4 Performativity and safety management.	106
3.2.5 Neo-Liberalism.	109
3.3 Discourses of childhood.	114
3.4 Overview of tensions and gaps in the literature.	118
3.4.1 Summary, how my research questions have developed from the literature	119
3.4.2 Research questions.	121
Chapter 4: Methodology.	122
4.1 Introduction.	122
4.2 Methodology: philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the research.	123
4.2.1 Ethnography.	129
4.3 Methods: how the work was done.	141
4.3.1 Research ethics.	141
4.3.2 Finding a site and negotiating entry.	156
4.3.3 Searching archives of written data.	160
4.3.4 The pilot study: April 2004 the first visit with Small school.	163
4.3.5 The main ethnographic field work.	165
4.3.6 Interviews; individual and group.	166
4.3.7 A discussion and critique of undertaking research with children.	177
4.3.8 A critique of interviews.	182
4.4 The analysis and representation of data.	185
4.4.1. Analysis: what researchers do with data.	185
4.4.2 The representation of data.	189
4.5 Summary.	202
Chapter 5: Wild Country Hall: Findings [in discursive space].	205
5.1 Wild Country Hall: A week in the life of a residential outdoor education centre.	206
5.2 A discussion of children's learning viewed through the lens of discursive positioning.	244
5.2.1 Initial problems posed by the data.	245
5.2.2 The distinctive discourses of Wild Country Hall.	250
5.2.3 Learning as the discursive positioning of individual identities.	291
5.2.4 The times we live in: neo-Liberalism, performativity and the formalisation of outdoor learning.	300
5.4 Summary.	317

Chapter 6 Conclusion	320
6 1 An appraisal of the research	321
6 1 1 Learning as discursive positioning	321
6 1 2 Discursive practices at Wild Country Hall	324
6 1 3 The colonisation of outdoor centres by government and Local Authority agenda	326
6 1 4 An evaluation of the research methodology...	327
6 2 Recommendations for policy and practice	329
Retaining the distinctiveness of outdoor education	329
6 3 Recommendation for future research	331
6 4 End of the <i>rite de passage</i>	336
References	337
Appendices	352
Appendix 1 Research ethics clearance forms	352
A) University of Plymouth research ethics form	352
B) Oxford Brookes University research ethics form	359
Appendix 2 Examples of letters used to inform participants and consent forms	374
A) Letter seeking involvement from schools	374
B) Example of the letter I sent to schools that wished to take part in the research, but who I could not accommodate	375
C Information sheet for parents and consent form	376
D) Information sheets and consent form for Head of centre.	378
E) Information sheets and consent form Individuals	380
F) Information sheet for children	382
Appendix 3 Extracts from data	383
3 1 Archive data.	383
3 1.1 List of activities that schools can select from	383
3.1 2 Individual child tracking sheet	389
3 1 3 Introduction to the school Lesson Plan on Wild Country Hall Learning Goals	391
3 1 4 Happy hour duties	392
3 1 5 The Wild Country Hall head's letter to schools enlisting their participation in an evaluation of the centre's work	393
3.1 6 Extracts from children's writing	394
3.2 Extracts from interviews	396
3 2 1 Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008	396
3 2 2 Extracts from group interviews	401
3 2 3 Extract from field notes.....	409

List of Tables.

Table 1 Five lenses on learning.....	53
Table 2 Visits made to Wild Country Hall.....	158
Table 3 Individual and group interviews.....	168
Table 4 The Learning Goals.....	212

List of Figures.

Figure 1 Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle.....	55
Figure 2 'Elvis' Walk on the Low Ropes course.....	211
Figure 3 Coasteering.....	220
Figure 4 Beach sculpture.....	222
Figure 5 Johnny's postcard.....	227
Figure 6 The Problem Wall.....	235
Figure 7 Canoes on the lake.....	240
Figure 8 Wild Country Hall buildings.....	251
Figure 9 Making the lunches.....	259
Figure 10 The Zip Wire.....	277
Figure 11 Conducting a survey of water creatures.....	282
Figure 12 Climbing the high pole.....	284
Figure 13 Gorge walking.....	289

Chapter 1: Introduction: outdoor learning and residential outdoor centres.

"I have wavered and mis-stepped, I have gone backward after I have gone forward; I have drifted sideways along a new imaginary, forgetting from where I had once thought I had started. I have fabricated personae and unities, and I have sometimes thought I knew something of which I have written,"

(Scheurich, 1997, p 1)

1.1 My fight against familiarity.

Delamont (2002) urges qualitative researchers working in educational settings to fight familiarity, and this is a necessity for ethnographers of education. For the early anthropologist ethnographers (e.g. Malinowski, 1928/1961) and for those who have gone into unfamiliar social contexts, perhaps in other countries or cultures to conduct their research (e.g. Rabinow, 2007), unfamiliarity was a given. Their task was to make the strange familiar. This may not be the case for most ethnographers nowadays. To a degree, Delamont (2002) is suggesting that qualitative researchers and latter-day ethnographers of education should make attempts to move away from those contexts with which they may be familiar because of their work or prior life experiences. She suggests that it is useful for educational ethnographers to search out the unusual, the different, even the 'bizarre' (p. 51), not only because these contexts are worthy of investigation in their own right, but by engaging with them ethnographers are likely to enhance their observational expertise. In this section I show how her advice has shaped the direction and focus of my research and this thesis.

Fighting my familiarity with schooling.

My thesis is about learning. Learning is commonly linked to the institution of education. Campbell (2005) states that education in England has 'become

synonymous with schooling, and schooling with organisation and formality. Schools in England are characterised by structures that separate children by age – in the same or different schools – and often have a daily structure that includes an act of worship and lessons arranged around a National Curriculum. Testing regimes are in place more to inform policy makers and parents about schools' effectiveness than to inform teachers about pupil progress.

Prior to moving into the higher education sector in 2002, I worked in English secondary schools for 22 years. Since then I have continued my contact with schools – of varying types – in my capacity as a lecturer in faculties of education in three universities. In many ways I am familiar with schools.

In my attempt to address Delamont's call, I chose to fight my familiarity with schools and schooling (Delamont, 2002, p. 48). I have chosen to focus on learning in the context of a residential, outdoor education centre that goes by the pseudonym of 'Wild Country Hall'. The centre is used by groups of school children aged eight to 11. This thesis focuses on learning associated with both the adventurous activities and the residential, social practices encountered by children when they visit Wild Country Hall.

Residential outdoor education has had both a presence within the UK education system, and an informal societal presence, since the 1950s (Telford, 2010). There are numerous outdoor programmes and outdoor centres in the public and private sectors. Yet, relative to research on schools and learning in general, there is little empirical research pertaining to outdoor learning (Thomas, Potter and Allison, 2009)

and that specifically on residential outdoor education is smaller still. Recent exceptions that focus on residential outdoor education in the UK include the work of McCulloch (2002), Nundy (1998), Stan (2008) and Telford (2010). Of these, only Stan and Telford investigated residential outdoor centres that offered what can be described as a general, residential, outdoor and adventure programme (McCulloch investigated sail training and Nundy geography field work, albeit in a residential context).

Readers unfamiliar with residential outdoor education centres may wish to read Chapter 5, part 1 now, for there they will find a data rich narrative called *Wild Country Hall: A week in the life of a residential outdoor education centre*. This narrative is my interpretation of the work of the centre constructed from data including some of the written archives contained in the centre, or available on the internet, observations and interviews. I have used the narrative to introduce the practices of the centre, some of the experiences of children and adults who have visited it, and also some of the ambiguities and contradictions I see embedded in the work of Wild Country Hall. In Chapter 4 I have explained how this narrative was constructed, and why I chose to present some of my data in this form.

Fighting the familiarity of others.

Delamont's (2002) urge to fight familiarity is directed at qualitative researchers and ethnographers of education. Nevertheless, I found her advice more generally useful, for it alerted me to a further conceptualisation of familiarity to be confronted in my research – the familiarity of others.

First, there is a high degree of familiarity with outdoor centres, established pedagogies and outdoor adventure education held by those who work at Wild Country Hall. To a lesser degree, but still of significance, is the familiarity with the centre of the teachers and other adults who have been using Wild Country Hall for many years. Put another way, many of the people I have observed or talked to about this project were greatly familiar with this outdoor centre, and sometimes with outdoor education programmes more generally. Their familiarity needed to be confronted in a respectful, yet robustly investigative fashion. For example, whilst my questions might sometimes appear to confront what others took for granted about the centre, or about pupil outcomes – those questions still needed to be asked.

Second, I detected a degree of familiarity – in the sense of casualness, of taking much for granted – in the literature underpinning outdoor learning as practice and as an academic discipline. This familiarity is confronted in a rigorous, intellectual and scholarly informed way in Chapter 2.

Rickinson, Dillon, Teamey, Morris, Choi, Sanders and Benefield (2004) observed a paucity of outdoor learning research that is informed by general theories of learning, or that has sought to draw upon learning theory to answer questions relating to understanding the outdoor learning process. As a strategy to confront the familiarity with outdoor centres of some of those I would be researching, and to simultaneously address the gap in the literature pointed out by Rickinson, *et al.* (2004), I have chosen a theoretical focus on learning. Rickinson, *et al.*'s (2004) critique – that there is little research in this area that draws upon more general theories of learning – remains current. For example, in a recent web based discussion prompted by C.

Wood (2010) it was suggested that outdoor learning suffered from having a shallow theoretical base, a suggestion robustly countered by both Seaman and Gough. Seaman (2010) pointed to some of the recent theoretical work undertaken in the areas of adventure, risk, experience and informal learning by researchers and theorists coming from such diverse perspectives as education, sociology, anthropology, psychology and philosophy. Gough (2010) took a post-structural stance and pointed out that the very idea of a shallow theoretical base doesn't make much sense to anyone who thinks outside of structuralist and foundationalist assumptions. He suggested that it might be preferable to argue that the activities we might call "theorising" (including the clarification and/or creation of concepts, analysis and critique of assumptions, beliefs, values, purposes) have not been performed or valued in outdoor learning to the extent that they have in other education fields.

The scant theoretical underpinning identified by Rickinson, *et al* in 2004 may have been partially addressed in subsequent publications by a small group of researchers interested in situating outdoor learning within broader educational theory (e.g. Brown, 2009, 2010, Rea, 2007b, Seaman, 2007; Seaman and Coppens, 2006), but the generality of the argument remains valid. Little mention of theories of learning appears in literature that focuses on outdoor learning. I consider any discussion of the claimed benefits of outdoor learning is well placed within a wider discussion of what learning is. Certainly, such a contextualisation of outdoor learning is important to this thesis.

Whilst the literature on outdoor learning abounds with claims about learning from and through outdoor programmes, there is some suggestion that the research is of low

quality. For example, Hattie, Marsh, Neill and Richards (1997) when searching for research articles to include in their meta analysis were struck by the number of "...papers that read more like program advertisements than research" (p. 45). Thomas, *et al.* (2009) have made the additional criticism that outdoor learning research tends not to build on previous relevant research, which I will try to redress in this thesis.

Rickinson, *et al.* state that "the number of studies that address the experience of particular groups (e.g. girls) or students with specific needs is negligible", (2004, p. 6). Since their review, some research into outdoor learning has focussed on precisely targeted groups, often those faced by social exclusion. For example, Prendergast (2004) examines the use of National Parks by different British ethnic groups, finding they are used most by white people. Various sub-groups of school pupils have also been targeted by researchers; for example, children deemed to be in danger of under-achievement. Bailey, Dismore and Summerson investigated primary school children identified as underachieving and claim benefits for these children after taking part in an outdoor adventure programme (Bailey, Dismore and Summerson 2003; Dismore and Bailey, 2005). A similar study with similar findings was carried out on groups of older children deemed to be 'disengaged' from education by Christie (2004). Conversely, the relatively socially privileged who can access the financial support necessary to travel on trans-continental expeditions have been the focus of some studies (e.g. Allison, 2000; Rea, 2004, 2007b).

I decided my focus would not be targeted on differentiated groups or sub-groups of children. I decided to focus on the programmes provided to primary school children

at Wild Country Hall, and the children's learning. I feel that had I focused on an identified sub-group (e.g. children 'at risk' or disabled children) or had I chosen to use gender as a delineating feature to provide a focus, I might be in danger of departing from my original interest in learning. Whilst sex and gender differences, under-achievement and engagement are important issues in education, I did not specifically investigate these, nor were they significant categories in my data.

1.2 The social construction of learning.

The three research questions that developed during my research are:-

- How useful might discursive positioning be as a perspective on learning?
- What are the discourses at Wild Country Hall and how are they different to schooling discourses?
- How might neo-Liberal discursive practices, including performativity and current schooling orthodoxies have affected the pedagogic practices at this centre?

In this thesis I take 'learning' to be a socially-constructed reality. Social-constructionism is the philosophy that considers all aspects of social life to be constructed by social actors (e.g. Berger and Luckmann, 1966, Burr, 1995, 2003, Gergen, 1999) and I have adopted a constructionist perspective consistently throughout my thesis.

Social-constructionism foregrounds the differences between the ontological and epistemological order of things. Social constructionists agree that whilst phenomena and 'things' may have a physical reality, they may only be understood in so far as humans can have meaningful knowledge of them. In social-constructionism

ontological existence, or physical reality, is considered meaningless. It is impossible for humans to understand physical realities apart from their knowledge of them. Reality can only be understood as socially constructed meaning - in other words, in terms of its epistemological status - that is historically and contextually situated, partial and transient.

For some (e.g. Crotty, 1998; Fish, 1996) phenomena and 'things' may be simultaneously real (that is, exist in material sense) and socially constructed (in that it is only through social construction that any meaning may be awarded them). However, at the extreme of social-constructionism are those who maintain that some things have *only* epistemological status. That is to say they exist only as socially-constructed realities and not as physical realities (e.g. Stables, 2003, 2005, 2008). Examples of such things are to be found in many of the most important and contested areas of social life, for example democracy, citizenship, intelligence, goodness and evil, justice, equality, rights and responsibility.

I add 'learning' to this list of important aspects of social life that have only epistemological status. Making use of the argument Berger and Luckmann applied to the status of social order (1966, pp.69-70) I argue that learning exists only as a product of human activity, that is, learning is not in the physical world. Both in its genesis (learning is the result of human activity) and its existence in any moment of time (learning exists only in so far as human activity continues to produce it) learning is a human construction. An example may be useful; I will now exemplify this claim in a discussion of the status of outdoor centres juxtaposed with outdoor learning.

Outdoor centres, like Wild Country Hall, have a physical reality in terms of their grounds and buildings, the objects (e.g. waterproof clothing, rucksacks, ropes, boats, climbing walls) and the people (the children, their teachers, and the centre instructors, cooks, secretaries and drivers) that inhabit them. More importantly, outdoor centres also enjoy epistemological status, in that they may be understood only in terms of the meanings that social actors attach to them. Therefore, there are outdoor education centres and outdoor activity centres; good centres and poor centres, high performing centres and 'failing' centres. Stables (2003) has discussed the epistemological status and social construction of schools as what he terms 'imagined communities.' He explains how the same school may be constituted differently by diverse groups, teachers, children, parents, inspectors. The same may be argued for outdoor centres. Thus, Wild Country Hall can be seen to exist in three distinct 'spaces' -

- In geographical space; as the grounds and buildings
- In temporal space. For there was a time in the past when the buildings were not there, and there will, we may assume, be a moment in the future when they will no longer be.
- In discursive space, as it is imagined and constructed in text

Thus, Wild Country Hall exists both as a physical reality and in discursive text as a socially constructed imagination. It might be said that it has both ontological and epistemological status.

Some of those things considered by strong social constructionists to have only epistemological status seem to have been raised in status through a process of

reification (Stables, 2005). "To reify, or engage in reification, is to take as a thing (in Latin, *res*) what is not a thing," (Crotty, 1998, p.217). I contend that outdoor learning is such an example. Reification has led to attempts to measure learning in the outdoors (examples of which are widespread in Hattie, *et al.*, 1997). The same can be argued of learning more generally. It is widely accepted in literature that learning is a human endeavour, explained variously as a cognitive process that may be developmental or constructive (e.g. Vygotsky, 1962, 1998); or as participation (e.g. Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Human and social practices, however, do not exist in the physical world apart from human being, thought and action. Stables (2008) has suggested that learning may best be understood as a reified theoretical concept for explaining how individuals make sense of their experiences. I have found Stables' conceptualisation of learning useful, as it allows discussion of learning from the broadest of constructivist perspectives - that is, how individuals make sense of themselves, the natural and social worlds they inhabit, and their place in those worlds. I see learning as something that humans practice or 'do', both within and apart from formally arranged situations.

Does it matter that I consider learning to have only epistemological status? Crotty (1998) observes that ontological and epistemological issues tend to emerge [or merge] together. I contend that it matters only in so far as readers should know this is the point of view I take in the thesis. This view colours my preferred perspectives on learning, discussed in Chapter 2, and plays a part in leading me to consider

learning through the lens of discursive positioning (Davies, 1989, 2004¹, Davies and Harré, 1990).

As there are few, if any, systematic reviews that consider the claimed benefits of outdoor learning within a broader discussion of what constitutes learning, it is such a review I attempt in Chapter 2. Conceptualising learning as reified theoretical idea has the added advantage of allowing me to move away from trying to describe what learning is, to considering the different perspectives from which learning has been considered. I have made use of Hager and Hodgkinson's (2009) 'lenses' on learning model. I show in Chapter 2 that most of the literature on classroom and school based, formal learning has made use of traditional lenses underpinned by the notion of learning as acquisition; whereas investigations of non formal, informal and work based learning have made much use of socio-cultural perspectives on learning. A contradiction I foreground in my thesis is that outdoor learning, which may be considered as largely informal, tends to have been conceptualised from traditional, acquisitional perspectives.

Part of my contribution to knowledge in the field of outdoor learning is putting to work the theoretical model of discursive positioning provided by Davies and Harré. I suggest that a lens on learning as discursive positioning (my italicisation of 'as' may be easily missed) may be useful in explaining learning at the Wild Country Hall centre.

¹ Davies' original paper was published in 1989 and included in a sociology of education reader in 2004. As I made use of the 2004 reader, it is that I will refer to from now onwards.

1.3 Learning as discursive positioning.

Put simply, discursive positioning suggests that by exercising agency and employing newly encountered discourses individuals may (re)position their identities.

Discursive positioning is a natural human function in the social world; it is what people do in order to define their identity and place in society. Identity, say Berger and Luckmann, "...is formed by social practice. Once crystallised, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped, by social relations," (1966, p.194). The role of discursive positioning in identity formation has a long history - drawing on the Foucauldian concept of discourse to develop Berger and Luckmann's (1966) thesis, and making use of the discursive psychology of Harré (1983) and the social-constructionist work of Davies (1990, 2004) and Davies and Harré (1990).

Discursive positioning, then, is far from new. Davies and Harré (Davies, 1990, 2004; Davies and Harré, 1990) have each used discursive positioning as a analytic lens through which to examine gender issues, especially the identity of girls and women. More recently, Francis (2006) drew on their work and made use of discursive positioning in her study of 'underachieving' boys. In the outdoor learning literature, however, discursive positioning has not hitherto been used as a perspective on learning.

In relation to a discussion of discursive positioning, two questions arise:-

- What are discourses?
- From where does agency come?

i) What, then, are discourses? Discourses are many things to many people. When I use 'discourse' where other terms - practice, culture, narrative - may have been used, it is in acceptance of the power of discourse as Foucault intended. In Foucauldian analysis, discourses form the objects of which they speak (Foucault, 1972). That is, they "both form objects and are formed by those same objects", (Zink and Burrows, 2006, p. 42) and I am using the term in the knowledge that there is a power and control dimension within all discourses. I am making a distinction here between discourses, which are meaning making systems that construct individuals as individuals construct them, and simply different (and sometimes unarticulated) narratives or viewpoints. I try to make a distinction between discourse in a constructionist and/or Foucauldian sense, and the common sense understandings of, and usage of discourse - that is, 'talk about' - by substituting 'discussion' or some similar word, in the case of the latter. When I discuss in Chapter 3 the discourses that pervade the practices at Wild Country Hall, I try to make clear where the power relations within them lie. For Foucault, however, power is not a strength endowed to individuals, neither is it an institution, nor a structure. Power is not something held by a few and exercised on many (Zink and Burrows, 2006), rather, power "is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society," (Foucault, 1981, p. 93). As MacLure explains, "power is diffuse, circulating in a capillary fashion around and through institutions, reaching into the very grain of those who are made subjects through their involvement in discourse," (2003, p. 39), power is both productive as well as repressive. In Chapter 5 I provide a number of examples of both the productive and repressive functions of discursive power.

The terms 'discourse' and 'discursive practice' often appear interchangeably in the literature (e.g. Davies, 2004). This is unsurprising given Foucault's (1972) meaning of discourses as practices. Burr (2003) has developed Parker's (1992) working definition of discourse as a social-constructionist term, meaning a system of statements, or set of meanings, that together produce or construct a particular version of events. It is this definition of discourse that I adopt in this thesis. These 'statements' may be expressed in written or spoken form, and in practices - our everyday thoughtful and thoughtless actions, the way we dress, the way we react to others, the way we treat animals and our environment. Thus, there is no difference between discourse and discursive practice, only that one or the other may have a better literal 'fit' in the text.

ii) Where does agency come from? 'Agency', it must be remembered, is also a social construction, and the exercise of agency a discursive practice. Berger and Luckmann (1966) do not make use of 'discourse' or 'agency' in their statements about the social formation of identity. Davies (1990, 2004) and Davies and Harré (1990), however, suggest that people may re-position their identities by making use of discourses; and Davies and Harré make strong claims about individuals having a degree of agency over their positioned identity.

Definitions and explanations of agency are far from clear in the literature (Butler, 1997; Davies 1990; Kettle, 2005) and there are disagreements regarding its possibility. Within social-constructionism there is disagreement over the possibility of individual agentic work on discursive positioning. At one extreme, Foucauldian perspectives appear to deny the possibility of individuals having agency; these

perspectives suggest that as discourses are always positioning individual subjects, thus agency is impossible. Davies and Harré are at the other extreme of social constructionism in proposing the discursive positioning of selves through the exercise of individual agency. Disagreement over the possibility of individual agentic work on discursive positioning may be seen as a continuum with, at one extreme, Foucauldian perspectives that deny the possibility of individual agency and at the other suggestions that individuals may assume absolute agency over their lives and identities. As with all continua, however, most people locate themselves more towards the centre rather than at either extreme. It is this centre ground where my work lies – for I argue that individual agentic work is possible, yet problematic.

Davies (1990) drew on the constitutive nature of discourse, particularly in relation to the social subject [the individual] to develop her notion of agency as discursive practice. She argued that agency is made possible in the following way – some discursive practices constitute some speakers as agents; in being so constituted, these speakers are provided with opportunities to make choices. Agency becomes “a matter of position or location within or in relation to particular discourses” (1990, p. 346). Kettle (2005) draws on Davies’ (1990) notions of agency as a form of discursive practice and Butler’s (1997) work around agency and power. Butler’s (1997) work on agency and power elaborates on Foucault’s conceptualisation of power and is useful here. Butler argued that discursive power acts on the subject in at least two ways:-

- First, as what makes the subject possible, its formation
- Second, as what the subject takes up and reiterates in its “own” acting [positioning]

In this way, agency may exceed the power by which it is enabled and seem to adopt its own purpose, which may diverge from the purposes intended by the power regime (Butler, 1997).

I recognise that more work needs to be done on agency in discursive positioning. Some possibly simplistic explanations may appear obvious. For example, agency might be seen as embedded within the person; being more evident in people who are of 'substantial character', have greater self-confidence or are simply more 'pushy'. Or, it might be conceived in sociological terms, akin to Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (e.g. Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). My preference is for a Foucauldian conceptualisation of agency - one in which agency is both constructed from and in discourse, as power flows between the discourse and the subject, but is simultaneously used by individuals in their discursive positioning.

Equally central to the conceptualisation of discursive positioning as a perspective on learning is the availability to learners of discourses previously un-encountered by them. My ethnography of Wild Country Hall foregrounds a number of over-arching discursive practices that dominate the life of the centre, and this work forms the major contribution to knowledge in outdoor learning made by me in this thesis. These discourses include place - including the appreciation, care of and respect for nature, the sense of awe and wonder, understanding and protecting the environment - and confidence and resilience building by facing and over-coming fears. Some of these fears are associated with the adventure activities of the centre, such as fears of heights and/or water. Other fears are associated with the residential nature of the

centre. I discuss these discourses below with reference to encountering and coping with homesickness, living with new people, encountering strange customs and unfamiliar social practices. The literature surrounding these discourses is discussed in Chapter 3. In Chapter 5 I present my data and findings, examining those distinct discourses I found evidence of in the experiences at the centre, and offer an explanation of how these make significant contributions to learning as discursive positioning.

I am not suggesting, however, that all these discourses will be new for each and every child that makes a visit to Wild Country Hall. Some children will have been away from home before. Then there are those who make a second visit to the centre. Some children will certainly have climbed rocks, surfed waves and paddled boats. Others will have encountered communal living in similar ways to those at the centre. Yet for many children, this will be the first time they have experienced these phenomena at first (e.g. being homesick) or second hand (e.g. coping with the homesick friend).

1.4 The 'colonisation' of the practices of outdoor centres.

Outdoor centres, perhaps especially those owned and administered by Local Authorities, cannot be immune to wider society. For example, Stan has outlined the increased aversion to risk by all those involved in the centre she studied (Humberstone and Stan, 2009b, Stan 2008, 2009) and this reflects societal trends (Furedi, 1997; Shaw, 2004). However, the outside influences on Wild Country Hall seem to have been so great that I use the term 'colonisation' when discussing them.

The activities of Wild Country Hall are focussed on adventure (e.g. rock climbing, canoeing, surfing), environmental awareness and respect (e.g. river walks, beach exploration, eco-warriors) and social living away from home; and may be thought of as largely informal learning opportunities. However, I found that the pedagogy of this outdoor education centre valorises what may be described as 'classroom discourses' – structured lesson plans, the use of plenary sessions to articulate learning goals to children and afterwards de-brief them on what they had 'learned'. There seems to have been a tendency to formalise learning at the centre. My data show the strong influence of Government agenda on the practices of Wild Country Hall. Part of my contribution to knowledge is the suggestion that this colonisation may endanger the efficacy of residential outdoor education in providing powerful learning opportunities.

To explain this formalisation, I suggest that Wild Country Hall may have been colonised by performativity and classroom orthodoxy, which may in turn have stemmed from the neo-Liberal agenda. The literature on these areas is substantial, but I have considered enough of it in Chapter 3 to enable me to make sense of my data and present a number of recommendations (Chapter 6).

1.5 Methodology.

Crotty writes about the relationships between epistemology, theoretical perspectives, methodology and methods in social research, using tables and diagrams with arrows that suggest a hierarchy of thinking - from epistemology, through theory to methods - (1998, pp. 4-6). Later, however, he explains that research is much more likely to begin with a "problem that needs to be solved, a question that needs to be answered" and a research plan that can work towards solutions and answers (Crotty, 1998, p13). Crotty suggests that it is during the research process, not before it

begins, that attention encompasses epistemological and theoretical issues to "justify our chosen methodology [and] lay that process out for the scrutiny of the observer," (1998, p 13).

I outline and justify my research methodology in Chapter 4. Having already stated that I have taken a constructionist epistemology, I write in Chapter 4 about the theoretical perspectives I have employed that are consistent with this; my inductive approach, post-structural critiques and the qualitative methods I used. In particular, I explain my reasons for taking an ethnographic approach to studying activities at Wild Country Hall. My ethnography, particularly the circumstances of my observation, necessitated a degree of reliance on memorised data. I explain the circumstances and reasons for this use of my memory, and defend it as a legitimate method of recording data.

1.6 Myself in the research.

I do not intend to write an auto-ethnographic account of myself in the research, but I feel it will be useful for readers to know sufficient about my background in order to make a judgement about how it may have affected the research process. I am persuaded by Jessop and Penny (1999) who usefully point out that qualitative research represents a view from 'somewhere'. That is, the perspectives that researchers adopt cannot be considered "an omniscient, scientific, all-seeing eye, a view from 'everywhere'" (p. 216), but nor should they be seen as objective views from 'nowhere', (the view from nowhere was first exposed as untenable in Nagel's (1986) work on literary criticism). Jessop and Penny move on to point out that qualitative research "is not a neutral exercise, happening as it does within the context of a nexus of gender, race and class power relations," (Jessop and Penny,

1999, p. 217). What they are arguing in favour of is, I believe, a heightened reflexivity that makes transparent the socio-cultural 'history' of researchers and how this may influence their constructions of the social actors and contexts they investigate.

One problem of making this history transparent is where to begin and end. All of my history may have affected the research, and all I can do is draw attention to those aspects of me that I think have affected the research. I am a middle aged, probably middle class (though born into a working class family), white, heterosexual, able-bodied, university educated male. I work as a lecturer in a UK university and am researching my PhD as a part time student at a different university. I am a husband, father, house owner, car driver and public transport user, sailor and hill walker, amongst other things. I have made an agentic choice about those aspects of my personal history that are and are not relevant to the construction of my thesis. First, there are my perspectives on outdoor adventurous activities, and secondly, my experiences and attitudes to being away from home, and how these may have affected my perceptions, my research foci and questions, my handling of data and my conclusions. Third, is my identity as an educated, male adult and the power this may have silently exerted over the children who participated in the research.

My views on the value and contribution of outdoor educational opportunities for young people are generally positive and have been coloured by my experience of schools as a pupil and a school teacher. The inner city secondary modern school in Salford that I attended from 1969-1974 was privileged to be staffed by a number of teachers who were committed to taking us out to the local countryside of the Derbyshire Peak District, north Wales and the Yorkshire and Cumbrian hills. I scaled rocks, paddled canoes and climbed (small) mountains whilst a pupil there. This was

my introduction to the outdoors. When I studied geography for the Certificate of Secondary Education, I learnt much in the valleys, hills and along the coast of north Wales. Later, as a school teacher, I became involved in outdoor activities as a volunteer because I held a conviction about the benefits of outdoor adventure activities for young people.

I am aware that I may be pre-disposed to favouring perspectives that value the benefits of outdoor learning. To counter this I have attempted to critically evaluate the claims made by some researchers of the benefits of outdoor learning, both in this thesis and elsewhere (e.g. Rea, 2007b, 2008b).

My experiences of, and attitudes to, being away from home are combined inextricably in my consciousness with my early experiences of the outdoors. My first overnight stay away from home and parents was when, aged 11, I took part in a residential outdoor education programme. I recall being stricken by homesickness, so much so that I refused to take part in a similar programme the following year. By age 14, however, I was more comfortable about leaving home and at 15 went away for a month to the Outward Bound Mountain School, Ullswater. I have remained interested in homesickness ever since. On reflection, I can now see my experience of homesickness in a more positive way. As a father I had little hesitation in allowing three of my children to stay away from the family, and live for six months in a foreign country, when they were primary school aged. I acknowledge that I may be inclined to favour interpretations of homesickness as ultimately empowering and resilience building and in order to counter this bias have sought to make myself familiar with accounts that contradict my view (e.g. Trescothick, 2008).

The third aspect of me in the research to be explored is my identity. As an educated, middle class, 52 year old male, in the privileged situation of researcher, how might this have silently influenced the children who participated in the research? A Foucauldian analysis of ethnography would highlight issues such as power relationships and the discourses these may be embedded within. I am a white, middle aged, fairly tall and (in some situations) confident male. This could impact on particular groups or individuals more than others, depending on their own particular experiences. For example, children without male adult carers at home, children in predominantly female-staffed schools. I have been described as a quiet and fairly gentle man, and there may be children who have never met someone like this before. Thus, their previous experiences of adult males and their experience with me may conflict. My role as a researcher, adopting an observational position as far as possible, is both privileged and unusual. This might give me an unhurried approachable aura, perhaps more appealing to some than others who mightn't notice me. These relationships cannot be ignored, but nor are they problematic, they are simply things which make the study very particular. The best I can do is be reflexive in acknowledging these relations, and recognise that they may form as much a part of the narratives of some participants as the activities themselves.

Whatever else readers may see in the disclosures I have made about myself; I see them important in so far as this – when I construct meaning from my data, be they archived written material, observations or interviews, it is from this 'somewhere' that I do so.

1.7 Implications of the research for policy.

New perspectives should always have implications for policy. As my constructions allow me to make sense of events at Wild Country Hall and, in the most general of senses, allow some predictions of what might happen in the future, I am well placed to suggest implications for policy. My findings are of educational significance as they relate to the continued provision of residential outdoor experiences for many UK schoolchildren.

Hammersley (2002) usefully suggests three models for understanding how research might interface with policy:- The engineering model, the enlightenment model and the cognitive resources model. My research may have a use in policy formation in the second of Hammersley's (2002) models (i.e. enlightenment). Drawing upon my discussion of formalising the work of the centre, I make a number of recommendations for policy in Chapter 6. Policy in the area of outdoor learning is made within a complex nexus that includes -

- National government.
- National non-statutory organisations such as the Institute for Outdoor Learning, the English Outdoor Council, the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel.
- Local Authorities, such as Anyshire, who own and are responsible for a number of outdoor centres.
- Private sector organisations (e.g. Outward Bound, PGL, Acorn Adventure) that decide their own policy within a framework of regulation, mainly regarding health and safety.

- Third sector organisations (e.g. the Brathay Trust, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, the Scouting movement) that, again, decide their own policy within a regulatory framework.
- Since many of those who work in the outdoor sector now have university degrees and Qualified Teacher Status, universities have an important role in preparing people to engage with policy and practice, and so I include them here.

Focussing on narrowing tendencies, that suggest outdoor centres may be in danger of losing their efficacy as they become increasingly similar to schools, I suggest changes in policy directed at retaining the distinctiveness of outdoor education centres.

1.8 Outdoor, adventure and experiential learning and education: a clarification of terms.

There are three main peer reviewed English language scholarly journals that focus on the related fields of "outdoor education, adventure education and experiential education," (Thomas, *et al.*, 2009, p. 16) and consideration of their titles provides a useful starting point for me to clarify some terms.

The Journal of Experiential Education (JEE), founded in 1978 is published three times each year by the USA based Association for Experiential Education. 'Experiential' is an important term within outdoor learning, and the Kolbian experiential model (Kolb, 1984, discussed below) remains a very practical approach for those who work in outdoor centres and on outdoor programmes. When I write of the 'experiential' in this thesis it is usually within this Kolbian model.

'Experiential' in the title of the JEE also seems to equate with 'outdoor' The vast majority of the 167 papers published in the JEE between 1998 and 2007 are focussed on the use of the outdoors (Thomas, *et al.*, 2009, p. 23) The 'outdoors' is fore-grounded in the title of the Australian Journal of Outdoor Education (AJOE)

The juxtaposition of these terms, experiential and outdoor, are problematic, exposing as they do the indoor/outdoor binary in the outdoor learning literature, identified by Zink and Burrows (2008) The essence of this problem is that a number of the activities that are usually associated with experiential education (e.g. abseiling, canoeing, climbing) can be undertaken inside Broderick and Pearce (2001), researching the development of corporate managers, suggest that significant gains may be made by using experiential pedagogy inside, and argue that it may be unnecessary to go outdoors Meanwhile many theorists (e.g. Davis, Rea and Waite, 2006, who appraise the use of the outdoors for learning in a UK context) focus on outdoor places, and practitioners attach particular importance to the outdoor spaces they use (e.g. Lockton, 2003).

The location used for outdoor learning can vary from the very local (e.g. the school yard or field) to the very remote (e.g. a camping expedition in the mountains), (Telford, 2010) I use 'outdoors' to mean any place away from the school that is wholly or largely outside Generally, I have tried to avoid the term 'outdoor classroom'. Rickinson, *et al* (2004) drew attention to the term 'the outdoor classroom' and this has been used since by others (e.g. DfES, 2006, Stan, 2008, 2009) My thesis, however, ultimately sees these terms, 'outdoor' and 'classroom' as

contradictions. Classrooms can be firmly associated with schools, schooling and formal education, whereas I am arguing for outdoor learning as an antidote to schooling.

The titles of both the JEE and the AJOE foreground education, whilst the UK based Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning (JAEOL) introduces what I consider to be an important distinction between education and learning. It is important to clarify how I use these two terms, learning and education, in this thesis.

In using the term 'outdoor learning' I concur with Rickinson, *et al.* (2004) that it is a broad and complex term that includes the wide range of activities taking place in a broad variety of different outdoor locations including school grounds, field trips and visits to specialist outdoor centres. Unlike Rickinson *et al.*, who tend to ignore informal learning, I see outdoor learning encompassing informal, un-planned and un-intended learning as individuals construct their own sense and meanings.

I see 'education' as the formal approach to the acculturation and socialisation of the young which, in western societies, has come to mean school and schooling. Within this thesis I make some criticisms of education that may seem negative. Perhaps this is inevitable given the broadly Foucauldian perspective I apply to my analysis of education, seeing education especially in terms of the power play of competing discourses. Such an analysis is built upon solid critical foundations, however, (see, for example, the work of Ball, 2004a; Devine, 2003) and is well expressed by Stables who suggests that:-

"...formal education does not affect the capacity to learn, but is about controlling the environment so that certain things are learnt and valorised.

Schools and the like channel learning. There is no evidence that they enhance it,"

(2005, p. 82).

Finally, the JAEOL introduces the concept of adventure. Whilst 'outdoor adventure education' has a specific meaning for some, referring to the particular branch of outdoor learning that has developed with a primary focus on developing interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships (Brown, 2010, Priest and Gass, 1997), I prefer to look at adventure in a more literal sense. Adventure is particularly important in the British context of outdoor learning. There is too little space here to discuss different national traditions and articulations of outdoor learning. Sufficient to point out that work has been done on these differences, focusing on Australasia, north America, the Nordic countries and eastern Europe. The British tradition has been characterised with a particular focus on challenge and adventure.

In Britain outdoor learning developed from the thinking of Baden-Powell (1930) and Kurt Hahn (see Flavin, 1996) both of whom argued strongly in favour of young people experiencing adventure. This argument was subsequently re-enforced by the work of Colin Mortlock (1984, 2002). Brookes took up the essentialising of challenge in two papers (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b) that are considered below (Chapter 3). Barrett and Greenaway (1995) have provided an encompassing review of the literature on adventure education, and, whilst not using the language of constructionism, point out the highly subjective nature of adventure experiences. I am not arguing against adventure, only pointing out that 'adventures' are constructed by those who partake of them.

1.9 The current position of Local Authority maintained outdoor Learning in England.

Outdoor learning and adventure education have a long history in the UK and a recently increasing profile in school activities. In many schools, outdoor activities have become part of the ethos and tradition. For example, hundreds of secondary schools take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and scores take part in the annual Ten Tors Challenge held on Dartmoor. Many primary schools also value outdoor learning. For example, Small School, which forms part of this study, has been visiting a residential outdoor centre for almost 20 years.

As this thesis is principally concerned with a residential centre maintained by an English Local Authority (LA), it is with the development and current position of maintained outdoor centres in England that I am most engaged. This is not to under-value the contribution of voluntary and commercial sector provision of outdoor learning opportunities; nor to ignore the diverse practices and provision of outdoor education in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. These are outside the scope of this study.

From the 1980s to 2006 two colliding phenomena were visible:-

- First, there was a growing acceptance of the benefits of outdoor learning. Arguments in favour of adventure education were being articulated (e.g. Mortlock, 1984) while the benefits of outdoor learning were becoming more widely reported. Reports of the positive outcomes of engagement with outdoor learning (e.g. Hattie, *et al.*, 1997; McKenzie, 2000; Rickinson, *et al.*, 2004)

and the benefits of the work of residential outdoor centres (e.g. Nundy, 1999) added to the educational justification for taking children out of school

- Second, due to negative perceptions of risk (see Gill, 2010), the financial costs often involved, and a largely inflexible and overcrowded National Curriculum in England (Taylor, Power & Rees, 2010), teachers were declining to take children outside the school. This restricted the opportunity for children to engage with out of school learning – including participation in outdoor centres, residential or otherwise

In November 2006 the Government launched the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto (DfES, 2006) to promote learning outside schools, and invited 'stakeholders' including LAs to sign up to its aims. This was supported by an investment of £4.7 million to promote the aims of the Manifesto together with the formation of the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom.

Notwithstanding this investment and commitment - and the distinct possibility that teachers are currently more willing to take children to centres - Taylor, *et al* report on the un-even and uncertain nature of out of school learning. Their research reports that over 66% of all English LAs have some form of outdoor education provision (235 LA outdoor education facilities in total) and over 66% of these (c. 157) were available for residential visits (Taylor, *et al*, 2010 p. 1021). However, they also found that provision was uneven. Most LAs had just one centre, whereas some others had as many as eight or 12 centres. When the size of LA populations were accounted for, it was found that " approximately 50% of children in England have access to 80% of

all local Authority outdoor education facilities and that 10% of school-aged children have access to 30% of all local authority outdoor education facilities," (Taylor, *et al.*, 2010 p. 1022).

Taylor, *et al.* (2010) point also to the precarious position of LA outdoor provision in the current economic climate, with 35% of LAs considering their centres to be 'vulnerable'. In conclusion, they argue that faced with even greater costs "...the number of (out of school) activities organised by schools is likely to decline rather than increase," (Taylor, *et al.*, 2010, p. 1021).

1.10 Background information about the schools.

The following descriptions of the schools involved were gained from my observations and from the latest Ofsted inspection report on the school. It was notable that, though each of these schools places a high value on their participation in the outdoor learning opportunities of Wild Country Hall, this was not mentioned in any of the inspection reports I read.

Hilly Edge School has 195 children and is situated in a small town in the south west of Anyshire. Most pupils are of White British heritage with very few from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. No pupil is at an early stage of learning to speak English. Around a fifth of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities - which is about the national average. Most of these pupils have learning difficulties or speech, language and communication difficulties; a small minority have behavioural and emotional difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. The school has gained enhanced Healthy Schools Status, the Activemark and the Eco Schools (Eco-schools, 2008) award. This is a good school

where pupils achieve well. There is a welcoming ethos where all are valued as individuals. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard and many paid fulsome tribute to the dedication of the staff. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and behave well. A wide range of visits and visitors and extensive after-school activities contribute greatly to pupils' good academic progress and personal development. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stages one and two has risen significantly over the last few years and is now above average. This is due to the much improved quality of teaching. The accurate assessment of pupils' progress enables teachers, for the most part, to pitch work at the right level for different groups. A strong emphasis on ensuring that the more able pupils are sufficiently challenged in writing means that they are making great strides and producing high-quality written work across the curriculum. Although the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in mathematics is above average, there is potential for the most able pupils to make more rapid progress. One of the class teachers at Hilly Edge is extremely positive about outdoor learning and has been taking children to Wild Country Hall for more than five years.

Small School is a voluntary aided primary school in the north of Anyshire. There are 122 children grouped into five classes, each made up of pupils from two year groups. Its status as a Roman Catholic 'faith' school means that Small School draws its pupils from a wide geographical area. Most pupils are of White British or Irish heritage, with some from Polish and Portuguese cultural backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the proportion eligible for free school meals.

The Head of Small School is passionate about outdoor learning. In the summer he takes children sailing at a reservoir in Anyshire and has been taking children to Wild Country Hall for 18 years.

Ofsted reported that Small School provides its happy pupils with a satisfactory quality of education. Pupils are polite, courteous and respond positively to the safe and caring ethos provided by staff. As one parent told them, 'There is a warm, family atmosphere which really helps my child'. Both pupils and parents appreciate the many and varied sporting and musical activities on offer at the school and in particular appreciate the 'extra mile' that the Head Teacher and the deputy go in organising these enrichment opportunities. Most children enjoy sport and learn a musical instrument and these high levels of participation and enjoyment are a strong aspect of the satisfactory curriculum and contribute well to pupils' good adoption of healthy lifestyles. Similarly, the strong spiritual, moral, social – for example, the older children serve younger ones at lunch times - and cultural ethos of the school secures pupils' good levels of personal development and well-being. This means that pupils leave as mature young people with strong views which they express with confidence and clarity. Attainment by the end of Year six is in line with or above national averages and achievement is satisfactory. Children are enthusiastic about their responsibilities, but rightly feel that the school could make more of their contributions. 'We talk a lot and don't always do a lot' was their verdict on the role of the school council. Children are not always given as much responsibility as their mature attitudes warrant.

Suburbia Row School is an average sized primary school on the outskirts of one of Anyshire's cities. There are 222 children on roll, three-quarters of whom are of a White British background. The proportion of pupils from different ethnic groups is average, with many of these children coming from professional families. Numbers of those whose first language is not English are well below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The school has Healthy School status and the Activemark for PE. The Deputy Head co-ordinates PE and leads the Wild Country Hall visits. The school is currently working to become an Eco School.

Ofsted reported that Suburbia Row is a good, inclusive school with a strong sense of community. Many parents see the school as an important focus in the local community and overwhelmingly support its work, describing it as, 'A happy school where the atmosphere is friendly and welcoming'. In recent years the school has experienced a degree of staff turnover. Currently a more stable staff, improving quality of teaching and well-targeted support are enabling pupils to achieve well. Current standards by the time pupils leave school are broadly average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Most pupils have responded well to teachers' raised expectations of behaviour and attitudes to learning are now good. Behaviour is managed well and the great majority of pupils respond positively to the challenges of their teachers. Pupils demonstrate good levels of concentration and their improved behaviour contributes well to purposeful and productive lessons. Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables them to develop a strong sense of right and wrong, and caring for others. Their awareness of healthy lifestyles and of being safe are additional strengths of the school. Through

the school council, pupils are proud of the way they have contributed to the improvement in healthy lunches and the demonstration of new equipment at playtimes enables all to have a good regard for safety. The excellent range of clubs and activities considerably enhances the good curriculum and give good support to pupils' personal development and well-being. Sporting activities, music, art and the after-school club also contribute strongly to pupils' well-being.

City Road Primary.

There was a fourth school – City Road Primary – that was to be included in the research with a visit to Wild Country Hall planned for June 2005. I visited the school and spoke to children, parents and teachers about the research as part of the consent process. However, very late in the process it emerged that City Road were combining with another school, to make up numbers. In this case I felt I could not proceed with the intended visit as I had not approached the second school about the research or ethical considerations.

1.11 Summary.

In this thesis I am setting out to illuminate outdoor learning by focussing on a number of particular questions that have hitherto been overlooked. The first question I ask is, as a perspective on learning outdoors, how useful is discursive positioning? Much work has been done on perspectives on learning (summarised in Hager and Hodgkinson, 2009) and discursive positioning (Harré, 1983, Davies, 1990, 2004, Davies and Harré, 1990), but thus far there is gap in the literature in terms of considering outdoor learning as discursive positioning

I ask what are the discourses at Wild Country Hall and how are they different to schooling discourses? Hitherto, nobody has published a study of an outdoor education centre in terms of the discursive practices observed there

I ask how might neo-Liberal discursive practices, including performativity and current schooling orthodoxies have affected the pedagogic practices at this centre? Others have begun to suggest changes in the practices of outdoor centres as a result of neo-Liberalism (e.g. Taylor, *et al*, 2010), but so far no published studies have suggested that such changes are making centres more like schools.

I began my introduction with a quote from Scheurich's (1997) introduction as I empathise with his wavering, mis-stepping and sideways drifting along new imaginaries. Like Scheurich I sometimes forget "from where I had once thought I had started, I have fabricated personae and unities, and I have sometimes thought I knew something of which I have written," (1997, p. 1). However, readers of my thesis may gain a different impression, perhaps one of a degree of certainty and

assuredness, of logical process and clear direction. This is, I suggest, because finished academic writings are examples of Baudrillard's (1996) simulacra. At one and the same time simulacra pertain to be accurate and faithful reconstructions of the research process yet may bear little relation to events (Scheurich, 1997).

Likening this thesis to a Baudrillardian (1996) simulacrum explains how my construction and sequencing of chapters might suggest a certain chronology to the research process – *review of literature, formulation of questions, methodological considerations, data generation followed by data analysis and writing* – whereas my analysis was carried out contemporaneously alongside data 'collection' (Jeffrey, 2006) and my literature review was re-visited and (re)written as new themes were constructed through my (re)reading of data. Similarly, the very idea of 'findings' is problematic in constructionist research and thus I position my 'findings' in the discursive space of Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Outdoor learning: theory and perspectives [or lenses].

"[Outdoor experiences are] often the most memorable learning experiences, help us to make sense of the world around us by making links between feelings and learning. They stay with us into adulthood and affect our behaviour, lifestyle and work. they allow us to transfer learning experienced outside to the classroom and *vice versa*,"

(DfES, 2006, p 1)

"By helping young people apply their knowledge across a range of challenges, learning outside the classroom builds bridges between theory and reality, schools and communities, young people and their futures. Quality learning experiences in 'real' situations have the capacity to raise achievement across a range of subjects and to develop better personal and social skills,"

(DfES, 2006, p 4)

2.1 Introduction.

The two quotes above, from the '*Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto*' (DfES, 2006), a Parliamentary and therefore cross party publication, make bold claims about the efficacy of outside learning. When read critically they also draw attention to a number of the problematic areas across the literature surrounding outdoor learning. These problematic areas include -

- The assumption of links between cognitive and affective learning
- An uncritical acceptance of the problematic concept of learning transfer
- Uncritical assumptions about theory juxtaposed with reality
- Assumptions about learning gains made without a robust evidential base or engagement with theory.
- Uncritical assertions about the efficacy of outdoor learning situated in realism and authenticity
- The assumption that engagement in outdoor learning can raise achievement

All of these issues are to be explored *inter alia* in this chapter, which is divided into two sections:-

First, I provide an overview of what I see as the key literature on outdoor, adventure and experiential learning. In so doing I attempt to give substance, shape and colour to the field of research in which I am working; guiding the reader through the debates that influence this field. Whilst providing this overview of relevant literature I also consider a smaller selection of the literature as examples of research that expose and typify what I consider to be important themes and problematic issues. Throughout, I make use of the metaphor of a 'lens', an approach used by others (e.g. Sfard, 1998; Hager and Hodkinson, 2009). Lenses help us to see things differently, or more clearly; perspective might be an equally useful term. I consider the three main lenses on outdoor learning - acquisitional, experiential and socio-cultural - pointing out the limitations of each of these in understanding learning at the Wild Country Hall centre. Having examined these lenses and pointed out their limitations, I make the argument for adopting an alternative way of considering learning at Wild Country Hall - learning as discursive positioning - as a useful way of considering my data.

Second, I place my own work within this literature. I make clear where I see tensions and gaps in the literature and show how my research questions have been developed from the literature. I define where my area of questioning, research and findings can contribute to existing knowledge.

2.2 Perspectives on outdoor learning.

Strong evidence of the benefits of outdoor learning exists in literature and these have been summarised in a number of important reviews. One problem with reviews is that any conclusions are limited by the approaches and research foci of the original works. For example, Hattie, *et al* (1997) investigated the impact on participants of Outward Bound programmes, arguing that these programmes have an effect which is greater and more long-lasting than conventional, classroom based educational programmes. Their meta analysis made use of the effect size statistical approach (Cohen, 1988) to measure impact which meant they were positioned to focus on previous research findings expressed in quantifiable terms. Thus, they used studies primarily focussed on the development of psychological constructs such as self-concept, measured through self-audit instruments. The acquisition of enhanced self-concept through outdoor learning programmes is discussed below

More discursive reviews have also been undertaken, for example, Barrett and Greenaway (1995) and McKenzie, (2000) undertook generalised reviews. Muñoz's (2009) review of literature focuses on children, their health and the outdoors. Rickinson, *et al* (2004) conducted a review of 150 pieces of research on outdoor learning, though they focussed primarily on field studies, published in English between 1993 and 2003. They state that this research indicates the value of programmes that -

“ . incorporate well-designed preparatory and follow-up work [and] use a range of carefully structured learning activities and assessments linked to the school curriculum,”

(Rickinson, *et al* ; 2004, p. 7).

A similar focus on design and preparation was adopted by Taylor, *et al.* (2010) who also emphasise the importance of outdoor learning opportunities that are well planned and linked to the curriculum, school and classroom. The emphases and conclusions of Rickinson, *et al.* (2004) and Taylor, *et al.* (2010) are substantially different to the findings in this thesis. Whilst they focus on planning and preparation and links to the curriculum, I focus on the differences between the outdoor centre I investigated and schools. This is explored *inter alia* in what follows, but the essence of our disagreement maybe that whilst Rickinson, *et al.*, (2004), Taylor, *et al.* (2010) and a number of others, for example, Shirilla, Gass and Anderson (2009), tend to focus on outdoor learning as adjuncts to formal education programmes, I am more interested in informal learning.

There is consensus that research seems to have improved understanding about the nature of the activities and the intended outcomes from them. Telford (2010) provides a concise overview of the intended learning outcomes of outdoor programmes, which vary from:-

- Field studies with a subject-specific focus, commonly biology or geography.
- Skill and knowledge acquisition in specific physical activities, e.g. kayaking or rock climbing.
- Personal and social development (which may also be conceived as the acquisition or development of social skills) as a result of group experience.
- Or a combination of these.

Investigations of many outdoor programmes tend to focus on the effects or benefits framed in terms of acquisition. For example, Christie (2004), Dismore and Bailey

(2005), and Nundy (1998, 1999) each focussed on participant benefits in terms of improved performance in curricular tests and examinations. Other research has focussed on the acquisition of skills. For example, Gibbs and Bunyan (1997) and Swarbrick, Eastwood and Tutton (2004) considered the increased acquisition of self-esteem through outdoor programmes. Acquisitional lenses on outdoor learning are discussed in part 2.2.2 below.

More recently outdoor literature has taken a turn towards using socio-cultural theories of learning, sometimes aimed at directly challenging acquisitional models (Brown, 2010), and often making use of participation theory (e.g. McCulloch, 2007, Seaman, 2007). I discuss these in section 2.2.3, below.

I have identified five perspectives on outdoor learning in the literature. These perspectives are not new, and four of these were recently brought into focus by Hager and Hodkinson (2009) who used the term 'lenses' on learning when discussing them. These are -

- The propositional learning lens
- The skills learning lens
- The learning as participation lens.
- The learning as transformation or 'becoming' lens

Continuing with Hager and Hodkinson's (2009) ocular metaphor I have added the experiential learning lens. This perspective on learning has been developed from the work of Kolb (1984) and is widely, though largely uncritically, accepted and adopted in outdoor learning. These five lenses may also be categorised in terms of whether

they are acquisitional or socio-cultural, and may be expressed in tabular form [see table 1].

Acquisitional lenses	Socio-cultural lenses
The propositional learning lens	The participation lens
The skills learning lens	The transformation or 'becoming' lens
The experiential learning lens	

Table 1 Five lenses on learning.

Broadly, formal schooling has traditionally been analysed using the set of lenses on the left hand side of table 1, especially focussing on the acquisition of procedural knowledge and skills. Non-formal learning, informal learning and workplace learning have tended to be conceptualised using the second set of lenses, the socio-cultural lenses on the right hand side of table 1.

Outdoor learning, though it may usefully be defined in terms of informality (Festeu and Humberstone, 2006) and participation, seems to have been analysed using acquisitional lenses, especially the acquisition of life-skills through an experiential learning process.

2.2.1 The experiential learning lens.

The most widely adopted outdoor pedagogy is heavily reliant upon the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984) and this is widely supposed to be the process through which participants in outdoor programmes acquire knowledge and skills. Kolb developed this theory in the 1970s in the context of his teaching of

management students in the USA. The theory suggests a four stage cycle comprising experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation - as shown in figure 1. Learners are described as moving through this cycle from one experience to another, moderating their behaviour as they do so and learning by turning experience into abstract conceptualisation

Coffield, Moseley, Hall and Ecclestone (2004) suggest that Kolb's main contribution was not in producing a new theory of learning (for them, too much was already formed in the ideas of Dewey, Lewin and Piaget) but in the development of the Learning Style Inventory that accompanies the experiential learning model. However, as Kolb's experiential learning model has been widely, and I suggest, uncritically adopted in outdoor learning, I argue that it is in need of critique

Thomas (2007) has argued how theories of learning may have damaging consequences for practice. For example, he has suggested that "Piagetian theory had led to all kinds of practical spin-offs such as reading readiness.. that did no service at all to children", (Thomas, 2007, p. 2). Thomas argues that this is due, in part at least, to the tendency to over-simplification and reduction both within the generation of theory and in its application to practice. This has tended to be the case in the way experiential learning theory has been translated into a number of practical models for use in the outdoors (e.g. Beard and Wilson, 2002, Dennison and Kirk, 1990, Exeter, 2001)

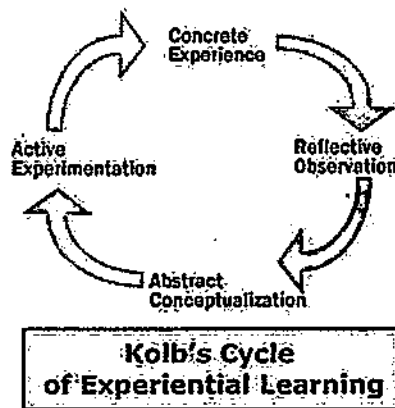


Figure 1 Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle.

In outdoor learning there has been an emphasis on leader [adult] intervention. This is especially in the reflective observation and active experimentation stages, whilst the abstract conceptualisation stage has been largely overlooked. Outdoor learning models of experiential learning have thus tended to privilege the experience and reflective stages of the cycle, so promoting varying degrees of adult intervention. 'Processing' (Bacon, 1987), 'reflecting' (Taniguchi, Freeman and LeGrand Richards, 2005) or 'reviewing' (Greenaway, 2002) are all models of intervention or 'facilitation' by course leaders designed to encourage reflection on the part of participants.

These approaches to encouraging reflection have become embedded into many outdoor programmes with, according to McKenzie (2000), little research conducted on how the processing may affect outcomes. Seaman (2007) critiques the generally unquestioning acceptance of constructivist learning theory in the field of outdoor learning.

Experiential learning has become a model of teaching rather than a theory of learning. Wolfe and Samdahl (2005) point out that many practitioners 'cling' to

assumptions that shape their practice despite the absence of empirical evidence for supporting these assumptions. I suggest this is the case in respect of experiential learning. The outdoor learning literature has tended to accept experiential learning theory uncritically, with debate focussing on technical aspects of it. For example, Rickinson, *et al*, (2004) draw attention to the role of facilitation in the learning process which they claim is vital to successful programmes. The need for explicit processing interventions by adults and outdoor leaders, in order to achieve the stage of reflection on experience has been strongly advocated (Greenaway, 2002, Pfeiffer and Jones, 1983; Ricketts and Willis, 2001). Pearson and Smith (1985) argue that effective de-briefing requires time, and that the period of time allocated to it should be as long as the activity itself. These views are challenged by James (1980) who has argued that exposure to the outdoors, especially to wilderness, was sufficient without overt facilitation provided by intervention. Recent research indicates that reflection may occur spontaneously (Rea, 2004, 2007b) thus seeming to support James' (1980) argument.

Though developed by Kolb (1984) specifically as a theory to explain adult learning the influence of experiential learning theory can also be seen extensively in outdoor programmes with children (e.g. Cooper, 1998). At the Wild Country Hall centre many times adults were observed intervening to encourage or promote reflection on the part of children. I expand on this in detail in Chapter 5.

2.2.2 Outdoor learning as acquisition.

Many traditional perceptions of learning see learning as acquisition. Hager and Hodkinson suggest this is the 'common sense' perspective on learning (2009, p. 622) and suggest it is most closely associated with the learning of facts, concepts, propositions and the like. Their skills learning lens is similar to the propositional learning lens, in that it is based upon the notion of acquisition, its distinctiveness resting in the acquisition of skills rather than propositional knowledge (Hager and Hodkinson, 2009, p. 624). The common metaphors that are used - such as knowledge 'sinking in', people 'soaking up' information, gaining more skills or being 'up-skilled' - seem to re-enforce the commonality of this acquisitional perspective. I suggest it most useful to consider these two lenses together when using them to look at outdoor learning.

Occasionally, research has centred on the acquisition of what may be called 'outdoor knowledge'. For example, participant perceptions of the environment and its conservation (e.g. Bogner, 1999, 2002) or what Ewert (2004) calls, environmental beliefs. Others have investigated the role of the outdoors in specific curriculum areas, such as geography (e.g. Nundy, 1998, 1999), geology (Orion, 1989), religious studies and spirituality (e.g. Cuffe, 2000; Hitzhusen, 2004; Rea, 2003) and science (e.g. Falk, Wade Martin and Balling 1978; Knapp and Barrie, 2001; McNamara and Fowler, 1975). However, it is more usual for research into outdoor learning to investigate the effect of outdoor programmes on learning in a more general sense, though still conceptualised as acquisition.

A number of studies have claimed improved participant outcomes in academic performance measured through test and examination scores. For example, Christie

(2004) claims increased outcomes in National exams following participation in an Outward Bound programme aimed at young people in Strathclyde and Nundy (1998, 1999) investigated the learning of geography in key stage two claiming improvements gained through field work over classroom based study

These types of study set out to show that outdoor programmes work. They tend to consider programme outcomes, such that can be observed and measured in some way, as being of greater importance than either the participants involved or the process encountered.

I have selected the work of Bailey, Dismore, and Summerson as a good illustration of research of this nature, for they focus on the impact of outdoor programmes on academic achievement. Their research report (Bailey *et al*, 2003) and the subsequently peer reviewed and published paper (Dismore and Bailey, 2005) typify many that have adopted a research perspective that focuses on outcomes and impact and do so in a way that tends to marginalise participant voice.

Bailey *et al* (2003) investigated a specifically designed outdoor programme - the "I can" Outdoor and Adventurous Activities Project – which was aimed at children in Medway LA, Kent, who were approaching their Key stage two tests but deemed to be in danger of underachieving. The children attended daily activities at a centre which were designed to improve their academic performance especially in literacy and numeracy. Bailey *et al*. make claims about improvements in Key stage two tests for some children involved in a

programme when their scores in trial and actual tests are compared, and when compared with the scores of some children who did not attend the programme.

Dismore and Bailey are transparent about some of the weaknesses of their study, stating that their evidence leads them to speculation, and the suggestion that they might:-

“...more valuably enquire into the relevance of learning away from the classroom, and of ensuring that all children experience some sort of properly supervised adventurous activity, not because these activities might contribute in some way to mathematical understanding or literacy, but because they are intrinsically worthwhile things to do,”

(Dismore and Bailey, 2005, p. 17).

Barrett and Greenaway noted in 1995 the need to develop a body of literature that focuses on participants' perspectives. “There is a desperate need”, they wrote,

“...for new research which focuses on young people themselves. Young peoples' accounts of their outdoor adventure experiences and development are almost entirely absent from the literature assessed...”

(Barrett and Greenaway, 1995, p. 54).

Bailey, Dismore, and Summerson have not responded to Barrett and Greenaway's (1995) call. They investigated data and perceptions relating to outcomes and tended to ignore both people and process, to the extent that they did not observe any of the outdoor experiential programmes they reported on.

In Dismore and Bailey (2005) subject voice is expressed through a number of verbatim quotes, but the findings are predominantly about impact and are mainly derived from the interpretation of test data.

I consider this an example of what Burr (2003) describes as the privileging of the researcher within 'scientifically' structured research discourses, where:-

"the researcher's version of events has greater warrant and is given more 'voice' than that of the subject. The researcher is the holder of knowledge, and the one who tests theories and interprets results. The subject merely passively responds to the experimental conditions, and their voice is not present in the resultant research report,"

(Burr, 2003 p 154)

In this thesis I respond to Barrett and Greenaway's (1995) call for new research which focuses on young people themselves and their accounts of their outdoor adventure experiences. I do this by focussing on the children and their experience in my ethnographic observations and by interviewing 22 children to gain accounts of their experiences in their own words

2.2.3 Impact studies and acquisition.

Studies of the impact of outdoor learning programmes on children's general academic learning tend to make use of acquisitional perspectives on learning. These perspectives may be useful in aiding understanding of reported claims at three levels:-

First, acquisitional perspectives re-enforce the arguments that the children involved in outdoor learning programmes acquire more knowledge (of geography, literacy or mathematics) – or somehow acquire this knowledge better - and are able to put this knowledge to use afterwards in the school tests. For example, Nundy (1999) claims that children acquired more geographic knowledge in geography field trips than they did through classroom methods, and Christie (2004) claims that participants in her

research did better in school based English oral examinations because they had gained more to talk about.

Second, acquisitional perspectives enable the claim that the participants have gained more or better mathematical and literacy skills through participation in outdoor programmes. This seems a reasonable enough argument to make. For example, in the outdoors children may be encouraged to use mathematical skills and knowledge in new and possibly exciting ways, in problem solving games and challenges that demand much team work and kinaesthetic activity as well as thinking. Thus, they acquire new skills, perhaps by trying something they had not before considered, or develop some rudimentary skills they already had. Again, this is exemplified by Nundy's (1998, 1999) field work geographers, who were able to carry out some geographic field methods (e.g. measuring the flow of a river) rather than read about them, or observe on a TV screen. It may well be that they acquired these skills, and a better understanding of the principles underpinning them, by practicing them in the field. An alternative way of conceptualising their geographic learning, however, is make use of participation in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger; 1991 Wenger, 1998) which is discussed below.

Third, acquisitional perspectives may enable the claim that enhanced self-confidence is acquired by participants during the outdoor programme. Enhanced self-confidence is then taken back to the school where it helps them achieve better in curriculum work and tests. This argument forms part of Christie's (2004) explanation of the improved performance of her participants in Strathclyde, but is much more widely claimed in the literature, to which I will now turn.

2.2.4 The acquisition, or development, of enhanced self concept.

There has been a great deal of attention given to investigations of the concept of 'self' in research on outdoor learning. These have been reviewed by Ewert (1983), with many more studies having been produced since. For example, Gibbs and Bunyan (1997) researched self-esteem in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, McRoberts (1994) researched self-esteem in young offenders, whilst Swarbrick, *et al* (2004) investigated the improvements in the self-esteem of early years children who participated in a Forest School programme. Sibthorp (2003a) has considered the related concept of self-efficacy, whilst Neill has focussed much of his work on self-efficacy (Hattie, *et al*, 1997, Neill and Dias, 2001) and has developed the Life Efficacy Questionnaire as a tool to measure participant gains (Neill, 2003).

Whilst this 'turn to self' has been critiqued by Hales (2006) who sees it as a recent phenomenon, it can be seen to be situated in the tradition of outdoor education developing individual's 'character' (e.g. Baden-Powell, 1930; Mortlock, 1984, 2002).

I have chosen to discuss Gibbs and Bunyan's (1997) paper on self-esteem to problematise this research on concepts of the self for a number of reasons -

- I feel it illustrates superbly some of the epistemological issues that arise when self-conceptual ideas are considered
- Their paper is representative of the field of research I am critiquing, including more recent research.
- It was published in the JAEOL, the leading British peer reviewed outdoor learning journal

- It avoids the criticisms made by Thomas *et al.* (2009) as it builds on the work of acknowledged authorities in the field of outdoor learning (e.g. Ewert, 1983; Humberstone, 1992; Mortlock, 1984; Priest, 1990).
- It avoids the criticisms made by Rickinson, *et al.* (2004) by making use of theories from a wider literature (e.g. Bandura, 1992; Maslow, 1987).

Gibbs and Bunyan (1997) reported on the contribution that participation in an adventurous expedition had on self-esteem. Using a hierarchical model of self-esteem, which focuses on physical self-worth (Fox, 1990) they argued that self-esteem increased as a result of participation in the expedition. Central to this argument is the notion that quantifiable positive benefits are identifiable. I will offer a number of internal and external criticisms of their work. I see internal critique as that which accepts the epistemological and philosophical stance of the authors; and external critique offering criticism on epistemological grounds.

A number of internal criticisms may be made of this work in terms of validity and reliability. For example, Gibbs and Bunyan point out that "generalisation outside the Award Scheme should be viewed cautiously" (1997, p.4). This implies that they consider a wider generalisation within the Duke of Edinburgh's Award based on their study is justified. However, I would argue that the small sample size of 126 participants means the findings cannot be generalised even within the Award. The research does not assess the impact of the expedition on self-esteem in the longer term, whether it has the same or similar impact after weeks or months and, therefore, whether the reported benefits of the programme might hold true after a period of time. The adoption of Fox's (1990) physical self-worth model ignores other

contributory factors, such as gender, age, or social circumstances I go further than this and question the epistemological assumptions that these discourses are based on, and the research paradigm they lead to I will ask what is self-esteem? Does it exist in the natural world or in the social world, does it exist apart from our talk about it?

Gibbs and Bunyan (1997) use a classic pre-post test, experimental approach to research (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). They use a self-audit instrument to quantify participant responses before and after the expedition. Such instruments are open to criticism as they take little or no account of context or frame of mind, "no account of whether or not I might want to choose more than one, or none, of those answers" (Franklin, 2006 p 82) thus making epistemological inroads into Gibbs and Bunyan's (1997) assumptions about the fixed nature of respondents' answers

Though Gibbs and Bunyan maintain self-esteem is "the evaluative judgements an individual makes about their own worth" (1997, p. 3), suggesting its subjective nature, I see their work as situated within a discourse that is objectivist and essentialist. Their work can be placed within an essentialist, humanist discourse, one that assumes there is an essence of self at the core of an individual that is distinct, consistent and unchanging. Thus, they see self-esteem in terms of de-contextualised, finite personality characteristics that exist apart from social situations. I see this treatment of self-esteem as an example of reification (Crotty, 1998). That is, the treatment of something abstract as a material or concrete thing.

This realist, essentialist view of self-esteem has shaped Gibbs and Bunyan's research approach into one which is predominantly evaluative and looks at measurable outcomes. The same essentialist discourse has affected the methodology of other outdoor researchers. It has helped sustain the prevalent epistemology of objectivism and positivist perspectives, which have led to the proliferation of testing and measurement through experimental methodological approaches (e.g. Neill, 2003; Nundy, 1998, 1999) and meta analyses (e.g. Hattie, *et al.*, 1997).

Such approaches may have been useful in arguing some of the benefits of outdoor adventurous activity, especially at a time when outdoor learning was widely perceived to be under threat. The focus on self-conceptual benefits has moved research from investigating outdoor learning outcomes concerned solely with the physical to the affective domain; and perhaps has contributed in the more recent focus on academic learning. Yet there is cause to be wary of these approaches because of their tendency towards restrictiveness and reductionism.

An alternative view sees self-esteem as a socially constructed reality; embedded in social context. For example, Burr and Butt (2000) argue that the increasing number of identifiable syndromes, and conditions such as low self-esteem, together with the increasing numbers who are diagnosed or self-label as suffering them, should be understood as the product of widely circulating discourses.

In summary I see this essentialising of self (e.g. Ewert, 1983, Gibbs and Bunyan, 1997; Swarbrick *et al* , 2004) as a weakness in the existing literature on outdoor learning. It has tended to lead to a somewhat narrow view of personal experience.

2.2.5 Problems with the acquisitional lenses on outdoor learning.

In my narrative (Chapter 5.1), constructed from archive, observational and interview data, Pete asks the children "what" did you learn? This might well be a useful way into an exploration of children's learning at Wild Country Hall. It is, however, limiting; tending to valorise the acquisition of knowledge and/or skills. Other questions such as 'how did you learn?' or, 'how have these experiences changed you?' may be less important to practitioners because they seem irrelevant or are impossible to answer in the short term. These more complex questions are, however, highly important to my research. Once I began analysing my data it became clear to me that traditional ways of considering and conceptualising outdoor learning were less than adequate for explaining the reported changes in children who had participated at Wild Country Hall.

I will now discuss the main areas of concern I have with the traditional perspectives on outdoor learning and explain how a consideration of learning in these limited ways would present constraints on my research, thus explaining why I need to consider alternative perspectives.

It has been suggested that, in a technological, information rich world, the acquisition of (especially) propositional knowledge may have been rendered redundant. When

considered in terms of propositional knowledge, there seems to be some degree of veracity in this argument. Some exemplification may be useful:-

- Nowadays, if people (in societies that have access to the technology) need to know something, they will generally use information technology. They might turn to an internet search engine (Wenger, 2008) or another computational device. This means, for example, that in a society where calculators and computers are ubiquitous, it may no longer be necessary for children to memorise times tables. Thus, the acquisition of much propositional knowledge seems redundant.
- The rate at which knowledge is created means that every morning we awake, we know less (as a proportion of what there is to know) than when we went to sleep (Benn, 2010). It is, therefore, impossible for any individual to acquire even a fraction of that knowledge.
- Some of the knowledge we acquire quickly becomes obsolete and so it may be futile to promote the acquisition of knowledge. For example, years after the introduction of the Euro there were text books in schools claiming that the French currency was still the franc. When I studied A level geography in 1974-6 I acquired the knowledge, from dated text books and a teacher, that the coal fields of the east midlands, south Wales and Yorkshire, and the heavy industries associated with them, were the power house of the British economy. Within ten years these had all but disappeared.

It can be argued, however, that as the need to know some things diminishes, so the need to acquire new skills and knowledge increases. For example, the acquisition of

the skill of using a computer is necessary in order to access the information available through a calculator, or on the World Wide Web

Though an issue in the wider debate about learning as acquisition, the redundancy issue is not particularly relevant to my study of outdoor learning. This is mainly because, as discussed above, most outdoor learning programmes tend not to focus on what might be termed 'outdoor knowledge'. None of my participants spoke about the acquisition of procedural knowledge, relevant or redundant

One of the problems posed by acquisitional perspectives on learning is the supposition that knowledge can be de-contextualised and therefore be considered 'general' knowledge. It has, however, been argued that knowledge cannot be isolated from practice. Brown (2010) has recently argued against the case for decontextualised knowledge in outdoor learning, but it is much more widely contested in general education literature (e.g. Seely Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989; Greeno, 1998; Lave, 1988).

A useful illustration of the situated nature of knowledge may be provided by the example of sailing. In order to skipper a yacht a good deal of knowledge is needed (e.g. of tides, winds, the various parts of the boat, the rules of priority and signalling). This knowledge cannot be effectively and usefully de-contextualised from the practice of sailing (except as arcane knowledge for quiz competitions). For example, were I to instruct a motor vehicle engineer to change the tyre on the starboard quarter of my car, confusion would probably result. Similarly, a red light gleaming in

the night out at sea has a different meaning to a red light on a railway track or road. Knowledge is situated.

The situated nature of knowledge is problematic to my research as it does not allow me to explain how children can make use of what they have encountered at Wild Country Hall later, when they return home or to school. As any knowledge gained at the centre is situated within outdoor education and practices, it is highly unlikely that it will be useful in other specific but generally different contexts later. An example of this in relation to paddling a canoe is discussed below in Chapter 5, part 2.1. This is one of the reasons I needed to find an alternative way of considering knowledge and turned to look at learning in terms of discursive positioning, discussed in Chapter 2, part 2.4 and Chapter 5, part 2.4).

Hager and Hodkinson sum up a mass of previous thinking that problematises transfer in general education when they “vigorously question the whole strategy of using the metaphor of learning transfer for trying to understand what happens when people learn...and/or move into new and different situations”, (2009, p. 620).

However, acceptance of transfer (of knowledge and/or skills) appears to be taken for granted in many areas of outdoor learning, as illustrated in the following extract from *The Manifesto: Learning Outside the Classroom*:-

“[Outdoor] experiences...allow us to transfer learning experienced outside to the classroom and vice versa,”

(DfES, 2006, p. 1).

Little of the outdoor learning literature seeks either to problematise transfer or adequately explain how people are supposed to take new skills and use them in

other contexts. In outdoor learning there has been a largely uncritical adoption of the notion of learning transfer as an outcome of outdoor adventurous programmes. For example, Sibthorp (2003b) chose to focus on transferable [social] skills in the context of the 'authentic' experience provided in a ship-based sailing and diving programme, accepting rather than problematising transfer.

What is transfer, especially in the context of outdoor learning? In what has been termed the "classical transfer approach," (Lobato, 2006, p. 432) transfer is based on a person's ability to recognise common elements in two separate tasks and utilise prior learning to complete the new task. As a construct in educational psychology, transfer "refers to the appearance of a person carrying the product of learning from one task, problem, situation, or institution to another," (Beach, 1999, p. 101). Put simply, transfer is when some knowledge or skill learned in one context is repeated or utilised in another context, (Brown, 2010).

Contextualised in outdoor learning, transfer is "learning from the adventure program into the participants' real life. . . We may view transfer as successful if this occurs, making the new learning permanent," (Priest and Gass, 1997, p. 175). For example, Priest and Naismith (1993) state that " . . . coping strategies useful in adventure, may also be applied with equal success to the participants' daily life at work, home or play," (Priest and Naismith, 1993, p. 20).

Brown (2010) is one of few who has focussed on the problem of transfer in the context of outdoor learning. He points out the strength of belief in transfer amongst many outdoor educators. This, he maintains, came into focus in the work of Wolfe

and Samdahl (2005) who examined the assumptions underpinning 'challenge' in ropes course practices. They noted that, "belief in transference is so strong that the primary purpose of challenge courses...lies in the impact that occurs when these experiences are transferred into other life contexts," (Wolfe and Samdahl, 2005, p. 39). They go on to state that despite the lack of evidence supporting this belief, proponents "adamantly cling to their belief that challenge interventions produce long-term change in individuals," (Wolfe and Samdahl, 2005, p. 39). There are three important points made in this work:-

- First, that challenge programmes produce change in individuals. I consider this a wider issue and discuss it further in Chapter 3.
- Second, that the learning from a challenging ropes course can be transferred into other life contexts.
- Third, that practitioners 'cling' to assumptions and beliefs despite the absence of empirical evidence.

Wolfe and Samdahl (2005) suggest that the learning from a challenging ropes course can be transferred into other life contexts. The evidence for this is, again, thin. For example, Singley and Anderson's (1989) review of research on transfer provides some evidence of 'near' transfer, which Brown (2010) explains as situations in which the task to be performed is nearly identical to one previously performed. Yet they found little empirical support for 'general' transfer (relating to learning generic skills, strategies or principles) "besides a few highly questionable studies," (Singley and Anderson, 1989, p. 25).

Wolfe and Samdahl (2005) suggest that practitioners 'cling' to assumptions and beliefs that shape their practice despite the absence of empirical evidence. The empirical evidence for transfer is thin. Notwithstanding this, many practitioners of outdoor learning adhere to the transfer concept, possibly because it offers them a degree of security that their practices have value. This clinging to assumptions in the face of thin evidence may not be uncommon, and I outlined it above in relation to the widespread use in outdoor learning of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model despite critiques of it.

Given the current debate on transfer in outdoor learning raised by Brown (2010), research that seeks to advance the theoretical understanding of outdoor learning would be helpful. The existing research seems to do little more than reinforce the existing (and problematic) assumptions predominant in the literature on outdoor learning, that is the uncritical acceptance of transfer (e.g. Gass, 1985, Priest and Gass, 1997, Sibthorp, 2003b). Explained from a Foucauldian perspective, transfer has become the dominant discourse in outdoor learning. It seems to have received a 'stamp of truth' both by the practitioners whose jobs depend upon it (Brown, 2010), and academics whose careers are built upon writing about it. Learning transfer has been added to the experiential learning cycles used by outdoor educationalists as pedagogic models (e.g. Beard and Wilson, 2002, Exeter, 2001).

In summary, conventional ideas about outdoor learning are bound up with an uncritical acceptance of the concepts of acquisition and transfer of knowledge and skills (Gass, 1985, Sibthorp, 2003b) and experiential learning, (Beard and Wilson, 2002, Exeter, 2001, Kolb, 1984). When outdoor learning is viewed from alternative,

socio-cultural perspectives, acquisition of knowledge, acquisition of skills gained by reflecting on 'authentic' or realistic experiences, and transfer are replaced by an emphasis on the social process of learning in a deeply contextualised physical environment where the nature of the activities support learning and reinforce its application to life. I will consider these perspectives next.

2.2.5 Socio cultural perspectives on outdoor learning.

Brookes (2003a, 2003b) has argued that the longevity of misapprehensions surrounding the neo-Hahnian myth (discussed below, Chapter 3) may lie in a tendency for theories surrounding outdoor learning to be over-reliant on certain aspects of psychology rather than other areas, such as the humanities and social theory. As acquisitional perspectives are cognitive and, by and large, psychological, and as these have tended to dominate perspectives on outdoor learning, this tends to support Brooke's view. It may be no coincidence then, that the turn to consider socio-cultural perspectives on outdoor learning coincides with Brookes' critique.

2.2.6 The learning as transformation lens.

Hager and Hodkinson's (2009) model includes a lens on learning that looks at learning as transformation. Transformative learning has been considered by Mezirow (1997, 2000) as a process which leads learners to re-evaluate their past beliefs and experiences, which is central to Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. Others have used different terminology for transformative change; learning as 'becoming' (e.g. Hodkinson, Biesta and James, 2008; Hodkinson and Macleod, 2010) and learning as 'formation' (Dominicé, 2000). Dominicé (2000), Hager and Hodkinson (2009), Hodkinson *et al.* (2008), Hodkinson and Macleod (2010) and Mezirow (1997,

2000) seem to be suggesting a process of profound change, or transformation, in learners as they 'become' something, or somebody else.

This conceptualisation of profound change in transformational learning is, however, problematic once all learning is considered as the bringing about of change, as in Stables' (2005, 2008) work on learning as semiotic engagement. All learning is about change. What, then, is particularly distinctive about transformative learning? Stables, Jones and Morgan (1999) acknowledged that some experiences brought about deeper, more meaningful changes than others when they adapted Harré's (1983) work by actively searching and planning 'significant events'. Perhaps it is enough to claim that transformative learning involves deep, powerful emotions or beliefs. It is learning that induces more far-reaching change in the learner than other kinds of learning, which shape the learner and produce a significant effect, or impact (Clark, 1993), it is those educational processes through which "previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open [and] permeable," (Cranton, 2006, p. 2)

I see these ideas of Clark (1993) and Cranton (2006) closely associated with the constructionist concept of discursive positioning. Whilst the rhetoric (transformation, reconstruction, becoming) of these perspectives is strong, weaker are the explanations offered of the process by which such 'becoming' might take place. One very useful way of explaining such transformative learning is, I argue below, through discursive positioning.

Outdoor learning may be transformational in some respects. For example, Telford (2010) undertook a study of 110 people who, when aged between 13 and 16, attended the Ardentinn Centre, near Dunoon. The study was qualitative; based on questionnaires and follow up interviews with 14 participants, interviews with centre staff, and archive searches. He found that the experiences at the centre were framed as significant events in the school careers of participants and concurred with Dierking and Falk (1997) that these had lasting effects. The significant events reported related to the themes of achievement, independence, self-sufficiency, responsibility and the development of more adult relationships. Though outdoor learning may be transformational for some participants, the learning as transformation lens has not specifically featured in the outdoor learning literature.

2.2.7 The learning as participation lens.

Concepts of context and situatedness are generally missing from the traditional perspectives on outdoor learning discussed above. These perspectives have tended to overlook the powerful socialisation processes that occur during an outdoor learning experience (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b; Seaman, 2007), the communities of practice that constitute many outdoor programmes, centres and sites and the communities into which participants of these programmes are bound to return (Brown, 2010). Beames (2005) attributes this phenomenon in part to the influence of Walsh and Golins' (1976) work which refers to learning as primarily an individual, psychological process denuded of the influences of socio-cultural factors.

Hager and Hodgkinson's (2009) participation in human practices lens is closely modelled on the theory developed by Lave and Wenger (1991), key to which are the concepts of 'situated learning' within a 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998); an

identifiable community that operates within a set of practices which may be explicit or implicit (Peacock and Pratt, 2009). In Lave and Wenger's theorisation, learners move from an initially peripheral participation and become enculturated into communities of practice. The peripheral location allows newcomers to engage in valuable dialogue with established 'expert' practitioners and the degree of successful participation, as the newcomer moves from the periphery towards the centre within the community, can be seen to represent the extent of learning

McCulloch has used Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of situated learning to further understanding of learning on sail training vessels, arguing that it is possible, though not unproblematic, to view a ship at sea as a (closed) community of practice in which learning is mainly through " . participation and engagement in the everyday practices, and not the instructions of staff themselves," (2007, p 300)

Brown's work (2009, 2010, Brown and Fraser, 2009) has also brought the socio-cultural perspective of learning as participation into the outdoor learning field. He suggests that an outdoor learning programme can be viewed as a microcosm of larger society, where:-

" .the focus for learning is on experiencing, understanding and raising participants' awareness of the changing nature of communities of practice and how they will constantly have to negotiate their way through various communities of practice – some they will only be peripheral observers of, whilst in others they will become more actively engaged,"

(Brown, 2010, p. 18).

Brown's suggestion that outdoor learning is about "equipping students with the consciousness and skills to recognise how to negotiate their way to fuller participation should they wish," (2010, p. 18) is problematic, however Brown seems

to be suggesting a prescription for teaching young people how they might engage in participation. Participation, however, is a human practice and all participation is situated. "Equipping students with the consciousness and skills" (Brown, 2010, p. 18) to engage in participation *generically* seems counter both to the thoughts of the participation theorists (e.g. Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2008) and to the observations of McCulloch (2007) that participation and engagement in everyday practices were of a much greater significance than were the formal instructions of the sail training instructors.

Many outdoor programmes suggest that they offer rich experiences to participants (e.g. Christie, 2004; Bailey *et al.*; Dismore and Bailey, 2005) and it has been reported that it is the nature of the contextualised learning within outdoor programmes that contributes to their effectiveness (e.g. Hattie, *et al.*, 1997; Kimball and Bacon, 1993). These experiences may be conceptualised as those relevant domain cultures referred to by Seely Brown *et al.* (1989). Good examples of this may be seen in fieldwork-based geography (Nundy, 1998, 1999) or geology (Elkins, 2008), where participants are involved in a process of acculturation into the practices of communities of geographers or geologists. Elkin's (2008) and Nundy's (1998, 1999) work may have been strengthened had they considered the communities of practice in which learners were engaged in the practices of geography or geology fieldworkers.

Participation theories seem to work best when used to understand clearly delineated communities of practice, such as professional or artisan communities, and sailing vessels at sea as they are very useful in explaining how participants are able to

adapt to and engage and become expert in the practices of the 'closed' communities of practice

Participation theories seem less well suited when focussed otherwise. They are less adequate in explaining how this learning may be put to use in wider society.

McCulloch's conceptualisation of the sailing vessel as a closed community of practice is important, as it signals one of the chief problems with participation theories, they have little to say about participants' learning once they depart the community under scrutiny. Participation theories tend to concentrate upon the context for learning, and the move from 'novice' to 'expert' within this context, to the exclusion of the learner and how they may put to use their learning in other contexts. Some examples may be useful here. First, consider the long term prisoner living and learning within the community of practice of the gaol. S/he becomes an 'expert' in the routines and rituals of prison life, both formal and clandestine. Upon release, however, the former inmate may not be able to function in the freer and more flexible wider society they are returned to; a different community of practice.

Second, as McCulloch (2007) shows, situated learning provides a useful theoretical model for understanding how young people learn from communal living aboard sail training vessels, but does not explain how this learning may be put to use in life ashore afterwards. Brown focuses on this issue when he writes, "change that is sustainable and ongoing is difficult and tiring work requiring involvement and support beyond the gate of the OAE [outdoor adventure education] provider," (2010, p. 19). This seems to point to the major problem with participation theories when applied to

outdoor learning programmes that may last from one day to one month, then end. There seems to be a still unanswered 'transfer' question.

Notions of participation and expertise are deeply situated, and the participation lens does not seem to satisfactorily account for changes either in context or in individuals. As Hager and Hodgkinson point out, participation theories "say too little about the individual's learning as their personal identity changes" (2009, p. 627). This provides another reason for me seeking an alternative perspective on learning as discursive positioning, and helps to explain why I focus in Chapter 5 on the discursive practices at Wild Country Hall (part 5.2.2) and learning as the discursive positioning of individual identities (5.2.4).

2.3 Outdoor learning as discursive positioning.

My thesis, developed throughout this study, is that considering learning in terms of identity, as discursive positioning, is equally valid and potentially more useful than the other perspectives on learning I have considered. It may enable a better understanding of the learning, or changes, reported in my data. Moving beyond my case study of Wild Country Hall, I suggest that conceptualising learning as discursive positioning may also be a useful way of explaining the reported benefits, gains and changes in participants of other outdoor, adventure and experiential programmes. Participants in numerous studies have reportedly described themselves as being more confident, either in specific areas including those relating to particular adventurous activities such as climbing or surfing, or in more general terms. These are potentially important changes in peoples' identities, as they move from reserved and under-confident, or from bullied and frightened to feeling less scared and more 'special'.

The concept of constructed and changing identity may appear initially problematic when 'identity' is seen in an essentialist way; as a personal quality or trait that may be fixed. However, social-constructionism allows me to consider identity as socially situated and discursively constructed. This view, if not established, is not new. Twenty years ago Davies was arguing that the concept of fixed identity had been successfully challenged (Davies, 1990, 2004 [first published in 1989]). Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue that 'identity' is a slippery concept which may be in part intentional, part habitual and less than fully conscious, part an outcome of interaction and negotiation, part a construct of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an outcome of larger ideological processes and structures. Without doubt, identity is a complex concept.

One way to reconcile any remaining notions of fixed identity is to differentiate between identity and personality. Personality may be conceived as a psychological concept, defined by Ryckman (2004) as a set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognitions, motivations, and behaviours in various situations. Conversely, identity can be conceptualised as a sociological postulation. Thus, psychologists may see personality as essential and to a large extent fixed whereas identity is socially constructed, provisional and situated. Social-constructionism sees identity as how people are positioned by discourses and, crucially, how individuals may make use of newly encountered discourses in the discursive positioning of themselves.

Harré (1983) explored how the individual undertakes her own 'identity project', positioning herself in relation to those around by moving through what he calls a 'social reality matrix'. This matrix consists of four components, each of which I have attempted to exemplify at both the macro and micro (my data) levels:-

- Conventionalisation, which Harré calls the personal attunement to cultural norms. For example, as a child, being baptised, saying prayers, going to church, being confirmed; or, being fed, clothed, cleared up after.
- Appropriation, which is making use of cultural conventions for the expression of one's own feelings. For example, exercising agency in a decision to marry in a church; or, expecting to be waited upon at home and thus deciding not to help with washing the dishes.
- Transformation, where feelings and thoughts begin to be represented in new forms which are significant to the individual. For example, asking the question 'why does an all-powerful and loving God permit famine, flood and plague? – or, noticing important changes in own behaviour, "It's a bit scary...I don't know what came over me. I set the table and I cleared it," (extract from group interview July 2005).
- Publication, where the individual makes public their transformation. For example, 'coming out' as an atheist and willing a secular funeral; or, acknowledging a transformation that may be permanent, "my mum said I'd changed when I got back from Wild Country Hall, said I was more helpful... when I got back, and I still do it sometimes," (extract from group interview July 2005 p. 1).

Harré's (1983) social reality matrix may be seen as one psychologist's somewhat positivist articulation of a complex social process. Nevertheless, it began an important project in explaining the possibility of individual agency in discursive positioning. Harré challenges any simple individual / society division by emphasising both individual knowledge appropriation alongside social and cultural norms and practices.

Davies (2004) in an important essay on gender in schools that Ball (2004b) describes as a careful piece of social-constructionist work, outlines the process by which our sense of self may be constructed

- First, Davies suggests, there needs to be an understanding of those categories which include some people and exclude others. For example, girl/boy, good girl/bad girl.
- This is followed by participation in the discursive practices through which meanings are allocated to those categories. For example, naming, dressing, behaving. This is not to suggest, however, that individuals use the term discourse, nor that they need have any knowledge or understanding of discursive positioning or social-constructionism. Rather, discursive positioning may be seen as a social practice.
- Next, there is a positioning of the self in terms of these categories and discursive practices. For example, choosing to wear the hair longer or shorter, to wear trousers or a skirt, to return to work after childbearing or to defer.
- Then a recognition of oneself as having the characteristics that locate the self within a discursive narrative, which Davies calls "the development of personal identity," (2004, p. 128)

This seems to be a useful model to understand how the discursive production of identities may work. However, I find the separation of Davies' first two stages to be problematic in light of the work done on participation. The work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998, 2008) suggests that any understanding of the categories which include some people and exclude others is bound with participation in those discursive practices.

Davies' (2004) third stage, the positioning of the self in terms of discursive practices, has been further developed by her in collaboration with Harré (Davies and Harré, 1990). They see discursive positioning as the process of negotiated account production. Using examples from discursive interactions between individuals, they suggest that even within social constructionism, individuals have a degree of agency in their self-positioning. Burr (1995) emphasises that discursive positioning can only take place when individuals make use of those discourses that are *available* to them.

Davies (2004) goes on to suggest that teachers can design programmes to develop the discursive positioning skills of children in order to help them to resist those discourses which may be negatively positioning them. She suggests a five part process:-

- First children learn to recognise the constitutive force of language.
- Next they learn to recognise and articulate the multiple and contradictory nature of dualisms.
- Third, they learn to recognise the constitutive force of image and metaphors.
- Next, they develop, or take up, alternative discourses.

- Finally, they gain the right to refuse old ones, (p. 138).

What interests me most about Davies' (2004) process or model is not the rather prescriptive and positivist style of it, but the fact that she uses the term 'learn' in the first three parts of the model. She clearly sees learning as a way to achieve some expertise in the social practice of discursive positioning.

This exposes the important difference between the work on discursive positioning of Davies and Harré (Davies, 1990, 2004; Davies and Harré, 1990; Harré, 1983) and my contribution to knowledge in this thesis. They regard discursive positioning as a social practice that can be taught and learnt. I am arguing that discursive positioning can provide a useful perspective or lens on learning. Whilst other perspectives on learning, discussed above, undoubtedly have their uses, they do not fully explain the changes reported to me in the data. Therefore I have adopted the perspective on learning as discursive positioning in this thesis.

Categories, discourses, which include some people and exclude others (Davies, 2004) are evident throughout education systems, schools and schooling. Devine's (2003) Foucauldian analysis of power in schools has shown how children participate in discursive practices that position them as, for example, engaged/disengaged, low achievers/high achievers, level 4/level 5; gifted and talented/with 'special needs'. I make the point that children 'participate' in these practices. Indeed, they have no choice but to do so within the modern western social phenomenon of compulsory schooling.

Then there are those other discourses and discursive practices that are present in many UK schools. For example, the "impoverished" (Stables, 2005, p. 97) discursive practices of many classrooms, discourses of fear, security (Furedi, 1997) and surveillance (Hope, 2009). Other discursive practices designed to measure and compare schools in order to facilitate the individual choice necessary in a neo-Liberal regime are discussed below in a section on neo-Liberalism, performativity and technologies of control in Chapter 3.

When viewed through the socio-cultural lens of discursive positioning, it may be argued that the effectiveness of outdoor learning is enhanced because it does well that which traditional schooling does badly. Central to my thesis is the argument that outdoor centres and outdoor programmes are characterised, to a considerable degree, by discursive practices that are substantially different to those encountered in schools.

The language used is important here. For example, Brown suggests that what outdoor learning is good at:-

"...is creating communities of practice with attributes and characteristics that are (generally) valued by the broader community as being of value in a democratic society (e.g. a service ethic, environmental values)...[and]...may help learners develop identities in activity and action which are long-term and sustainable,"

(2010, p. 20).

Considering learning as discursive positioning necessitates a re-conceptualisation and consequently a utilisation of different language. For example, what Brown calls the 'attributes and characteristics' of outdoor learning are re-conceptualised as discourses. What now needs to be conceptualised is how the discursive practices of

'service ethic and environmental values' might be fore-grounded in outdoor learning programmes and used in the discursive positioning of learners' identities. Similarly, whereas Stables, *et al* (1999) argue that teaching should aim to bring about 'significant events' within the conventions of any curriculum subject, the lens of discursive positioning would substitute 'introduce previously unencountered discourses' for 'bring about significant events'.

2.4 Situating my work within this literature

My work addresses some of the major critiques of outdoor learning research. First it addresses the criticism of Thomas *et al* (2009) who claim outdoor research does not build on previous work. I have made use of, and developed, work in the field of outdoor learning such as that of Brown (2009, 2010), Dismore and Bailey (2005), Gibbs and Bunyan (1997) and McCulloch (2007). Second, I address the criticism of Rickinson, *et al* (2004) that outdoor learning research tends not to make use of theories from a wider literature. I have accepted Foucault's (1975) invitation to use his ideas eclectically, taking a sentence from here or there, and using them as a tool to problematise or trouble, and thus have made substantial use of his work (e.g. Foucault, 1965, 1970, 1972, 1977, 1981).

Having subjected to critique some traditional perspectives on learning found in the outdoor learning literature, and having found these to be less than adequate in fully explaining my data and the learning at Wild Country Hall, I suggest a useful addition to the lenses on learning that might be used. Revisiting work undertaken some time ago (Davies, 1990, 2004, Davies and Harré, 1990), but hitherto ignored in the study of outdoor learning, I have used the perspective on learning as discursive positioning

of the self as a useful perspective and model for explaining the changes in young people's behaviour and outlooks reported in my data.

My major contribution to knowledge in the field of outdoor learning is my study of the discourses and discursive practices at the Wild Country Hall centre that are exposed to readers in Chapter 5. Davies (1990) argues that the agentive subject must have access to recognised/recognisable discursive practices and to alternative positioning which contribute to legitimating the positioning of the person as agent. As many of the discourses of Wild Country Hall may be new to the children who visit the centre, they are important to the process of discursive positioning. I also suggest that recent trends in education have changed the practices of the centre, making it more like school. This 'colonisation' of the centre is, I argue, potentially damaging to the work of the centre in allowing children to encounter new discourses.

Chapter 3 The discursive practices of outdoor centres and schools, and discourses of childhood.

"Our Mission Statement Wild Country Hall will provide stimulating and challenging experiences in environments that empower an individual to grow socially, academically, morally and spiritually, for the education and development of the whole person."

(Wild Country Hall website).

3.1 The discursive practices of outdoor centres.

This section considers the discourses and discursive practices common in outdoor education centres and is divided by a number of sub-headings structured around these practices

3.1.1 The discourse of place as 'the great outdoors'.

Conceptualisations of place feature strongly in the literature of outdoor learning and outdoor adventure (e.g. Bobilya, Kalisch, McAvoy, and Jacobs, 2004, McKenzie, 2000) Much of this work adopts a realist stance in the consideration of place. I attempt to balance this realism with a consideration of 'place identity' (Hague and Jenkins, 2005), the social construction of place (Augé, 2008) and place as discourse

The positive influence of place is often reported, with emphasis put on the special nature of natural outdoor places (e.g. Davis, *et al.*, 2006) or the inspirational and motivational role that the outdoors may have (e.g. Armitage, 2001; Fjørtoft and Sagere, 2000, Kahn and Kellert, 2002, Paffard, 1973) However, this positive perspective is contested by Falk, *et al.* (1978) who identified incidences where the novelty of field work settings brought about disorientation and feelings of unease to the extent that learning was hindered. Orion (1989) developed this into the concept of 'novelty space' and suggested that it might be reduced by preparatory work prior to the field work in order to increase the educational effectiveness of the field trip

Bobilya, *et al.* (2004), in an investigation of the solo, which forms a part of Outward Bound Mountain School practice where participants have the opportunity to go alone into the open countryside for a 24 hour period in a wilderness experience programme, found a distracting environment one of the three emergent themes indicated by respondents. A pedagogy of reducing novelty space by using portable information technology has been developed by Elkins (2008).

Elkins (2008), Falk *et al.* (1978) and Orion (1989) were investigating learning in the environmental and natural sciences. This learning seems to be firmly situated within a cognitive/ acquisitional discourse of learning. In such discourses the transmission of scientific knowledge is a prime concern, and may explain why they see their students' sense of awe and wonder (Meehan, 2002; Webster, 1982) as a distraction. In other circumstances such 'distractions' may form the basis of significant experiences (e.g. Hitzhusen, 2004; Rea, 2003).

Hague and Jenkins discuss place identity (2005) in terms of the meanings and significance of places for their inhabitants and users. Social structures, history and identity differentiate place from space in Augé's (2008) analysis. Augé's explanation of the difference between geographic or logistical 'spaces' and what he calls "anthropological place" (2008, p. 42) is useful in understanding place in constructionist terms. He raises awareness that places, even the open moorland surrounding Wild Country Hall, when considered as part of an anthropological, ethnographic or sociological study, need to be considered as socially constructed.

Augé (2008) allows us to consider it probable that people construct Wild Country Hall differently. In post structuralism all communities are constructed, or 'imagined' (Stables, 2003) and thus meanings relating to Wild Country Hall cannot be located precisely in mere spatial and temporal terms. For example, the adults who work there, those who have often visited and the children who visit perhaps only once, are likely to consider it differently. Some may dislike it as the place where their labour is exploited, some may consider it primarily in terms of improving their school's effectiveness, where key stage outcomes are raised. Others may form attachments to the place and feel sentimental about it. Examples of these possibilities are discussed in Chapter 5.

Any discourse of place which valorises the outdoors, and puts particular significance on the 'great outdoors' as special, is a discourse which invests power in those places and individuals who are experienced in and familiar with the outdoors at the expense of those who may prefer urban life-styles. These people may come from or live in small rural communities. More likely, and perhaps more often, they will be those who take pleasure in climbing high mountains, trekking in remote areas or sailing long passages.

There is also a discourse of the 'romantic outdoors' which may synergise with some discourses of childhood. In the collective imagination of society childhood has long been associated with images of the 'rural ideal' and the countryside (Muñoz, 2009), because adult conceptualisations of the child as 'innocent' are connected with nature, (Jones, 2007). This combination of romanticised outdoors with innocent

childhood may be described as a 'folk' view of outdoor education and learning, into which the rites of passage discourse seems to fit very well.

3.1.2 Risk, challenge and adventure.

Conceptualisations of risk, challenge and adventure feature strongly in the literature of outdoor learning, (e.g. Balazik, 2003; Humberstone, 2000; Jenkins, 2006) with Loynes (1996) suggesting that it is risk that 'sells' outdoor adventure in both public and private sectors. There are four main points to be made regarding the place of risk in outdoor learning:-

- In the British outdoor learning tradition there is a supposition of the value of adventure and risk taking for the purpose of overcoming challenge, (Baden-Powell, 1930; Flavin, 1996; Mortlock, 1984, 2002).
- This tradition has been recently termed the neo-Hahnian model by Brookes, who has thoroughly critiqued it (2003a, 2003b). Notwithstanding this critique, risk models are still widely used in outdoor pedagogy (see Brown and Fraser, 2009; Loynes, 1996).
- Some participants may fail to overcome the challenges set them, and the literature seems to avoid a discussion of the possible consequences of this, either within traditional and neo-Hahnian models, or within the critiques made of these.
- There is some evidence of a recent tendency towards risk aversion in some outdoor centres (e.g. Humberstone and Stan, 2009b; Stan, 2009).

The neo-Hahnian model and Brookes' critique.

Mortlock (1984, 2002) argued strongly in favour of making outdoor adventure a central feature of educational experience. This argument was based on the

presumption that adventurous activities have character building benefits The idea of outdoor challenge building character was formulated by Baden-Powell (1930) and developed by Kurt Hahn (Flavin, 1996) Whilst not wishing to suggest that Baden-Powell, Hahn or Mortlock may have been wrong to promote adventure as an antidote to risk-aversion, their belief that coping with the challenges raised during adventure activities changes personality traits is questionable

Brookes (2003a, 2003b) has argued that a dispositional, neo-Hahnian discourse that focuses outdoor adventure on 'character' building has become dominant in the pedagogic practices of outdoor programmes and outdoor centres He deconstructs what he considers to be the enduring myth of the potential of 'one-off' outdoor experiences that are claimed to develop personality Brookes' argument is that neo-Hahnianism is built upon the notion that desirable character traits, such as trustworthiness, assertiveness and maturity, can be changed through engagement in outdoor programmes Brookes has argued that character building in outdoor adventure is a flawed concept (2003a) and that outdoor adventure cannot change personal traits (2003b). He argues that an individual's behaviour in one situation may give little indication about their behaviour in different situations, (2003a) Drawing on the work of Ross and Nisbett (1991), Brookes suggests a 'situationist' perspective on adventure and outdoor learning, that focuses upon changing behaviour rather than changes to personality traits

What Brookes seems to be criticising here is the essentialising of behaviour, which is situated, into a personal trait - character. A reading of Foucault may help to explain how this essentialisation occurs Foucault explains how different words for what are

nominally the same phenomena, have the power to change meanings. For example, whilst sodomy focuses on a physical act, homosexuality essentialises such acts as personal traits (Foucault, 1981). Similarly, whilst eccentric or manic behaviour are acts or practices, madness and mental illness may be considered as personal traits or weaknesses, (Foucault, 1965). To contextualise this in outdoor adventure; if a child backs out of a climbing activity, the implication is that this is a transitory state contextualised through the activity. If children are termed 'timid', or of 'weak character', then the implication may be that this is a personality trait in need of remedy or therapy.

In Brookes' (2003a) view, character is contextually situated rather than essential. Baden-Powell and Hahn both defined 'character' in terms of duty, responsibility and service to society. More recently, in line with the 'turn inward' (e.g. Furedi 2004), character has been re-written in terms of the self-conceptual (Ewert, 1983). Thus, resilience (e.g. Neill and Dias, 2001), self-esteem (e.g. Gibbs and Bunyan, 1997), self-efficacy (e.g. Hattie, *et al.*, 1997) and self-efficacy (e.g. Neill, 2003) have featured in the outdoor literature. Such perceptions of the self-concept can be viewed from either essentialist or constructionist stances, and the way they are seen has a substantial bearing on research questions and research methodology.

The discourse of risk, challenge and adventure contains a number of complex power and control relationships. In one sense, power lies in the hands of those who create and manage challenge and adventure programmes and who take full responsibility for, and control over, those powerless individuals who take part in the activities. Though he did not write of discourse, nor did he engage in any form of discourse

analysis, power imbalances are the object of Loynes' powerful critique of the McDonaldisation of outdoor adventure programmes, where he argues that -

" . risk can therefore be viewed as a marketing strategy. Much like overt sexuality sells ice cream, cosmetics, cars, and just about anything, so risk sells outdoor adventure,"

(1992, p.37).

Put simply, risk is sexy

The discourse of risk, challenge and adventure seems to be bound up in a discourse of 'expertise' Where there are experts, there must also be novices and, perhaps, incompetents Thus the discursive power of expertise brings about the exercise of control by minorities of experts over larger groups in society; audit bodies such as the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) over centres and programmes; outdoor leaders over participants In Chapter 5, part 2.1, I exemplify how power exchanges between groups and individuals in complex ways For example, I discuss how these discourses work to position sometimes young and partially qualified centre staff as more expert and therefore exerting power and control not only over the children, but also over experienced teachers

Societal tendencies towards risk aversion.

In wider society, in the world away from Wild Country Hall and other outdoor adventure programmes, the discourse of risk, challenge and adventure is in constant conflict with discourses of 'health and safety', risk aversion and safeguarding. Whilst positive attitudes to taking risks and having adventures seem prevalent in outdoor programmes, other discourses are more prevalent in society at large

Both Baden-Powell (1930) and Hahn (Flavin, 1996) developed their challenge/character models partly as responses to what each believed to be societies that were becoming devoid of adventure and risk taking. These tendencies have perhaps persisted rather than diminished (Furedi, 1997; Shaw, 2004) and have contributed to the situation where children spend less time outside than they did in the past (Kahn and Kellert, 2002; Muñoz, 2009). Furedi (1997) emphasises the dangers to society contained in risk aversion, which he argues engenders a culture of low expectation. Similar fears have been expressed by Bailie (2008) in relation to the role of outdoor adventurous activities, and by Jenkins (2006) who has researched risk in young children's outdoor play.

In a very real way, then, the positive discourse of risk, challenge and adventure encountered at outdoor centres like Wild Country Hall are in direct conflict with more risk-averse discourses in society at large. In this sense, encountering these discourses is, I suggest, an important *raison d'être* for outdoor adventure and outdoor education centres. It seems, however, to be under threat. Humberstone and Stan (2009a) have detected risk aversion in the practices of outdoor centres where both visiting teachers and instructor/leaders at the centre under their scrutiny were perceived as being over-protective of children to some degree. Humberstone and Stan argue that such "over concern for safety, for the pupils' physical well-being, may, on occasions, be to the detriment of their emotional well-being and so affect the pupils' learning," (2009b, p. 30).

3.1.3 Homesickness and residential experience.

Nundy (1999) maintains that the cognitive gains of study in the field cannot be separated from the affective gains associated with the residential aspects of the field

trips he studied. This suggested to me that social learning in the residential context provided at Wild Country Hall should not be neglected in my study. With this in mind, I was nevertheless surprised by the emphasis placed on their social learning by the children I spoke to in my semi-structured interviews. Perhaps this may be so because for some of the children this is the first time they have been away from home for any length of time

Though it goes un-mentioned in Stan's (2008) study of a residential outdoor education centre for children of a very similar age, homesickness was high on the agenda of the children I spoke to, and it has been identified as an important phenomenon when children are away from home (Thurber, 2007). Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets and Van Heck (1996) point out, however, that homesickness is not confined to children. Homesickness in children has been investigated in the contexts of boarding school (Fisher, Frazer, and Murray, 1984) and summer camps (Thurber, 2005, 2007, Winland-Brown and Maheady, 1990). Whilst homesickness has been considered from literary (e.g. Hermann, 2007) and scientific perspectives (see Van Tilburg, *et al*, 1996, for an overview of scientific and medico-psychological literature), it seems under-researched from a sociological perspective.

Homesickness: the medicalisation of being away from home.

The word 'homesickness' immediately suggests a medicalisation of the phenomenon. An earlier term 'nostalgia', and the German '*Heimweh*' (Hermann, 2007), also indicate pain or sickness. I suggest that this is part of a medicalised discourse that places an emphasis on diagnosis, prevention and treatment. The medicalisation of homesickness has led to a desire to diagnose and define it in terms of tangible symptoms: "gastric and internal complaints, sleep disturbances, appetite

loss, headache, fatigue and a 'funny feeling in the legs' " (Van Tilburg, *et al.*, 1996, p. 902). Homesickness has also been associated with other conditions and serious illnesses such as the onset of depression (Trescothick, 2008; Weissman and Paykel, 1973) immune system deficiencies (Schmitz, 1992) and diabetes (Mooy (1995) cited in Van Tilburg *et al.*, 1996). There are, however, reports of less medicalised behavioural reactions to being away from home. For example, in an investigation into homesickness in US summer camps, Winland-Brown and Maheady (1990) frequently found examples of children talking about home all of the time, not wanting to eat, crying, attention seeking and fighting.

If homesickness can be diagnosed it follows that it can be treated and perhaps prevented. Thurber (2005) investigated homesickness in summer camp. A sub-group of boys about to take part in a summer camp, and their parents, took part in a homesickness prevention programme. This consisted of informative written materials, a follow-up telephone call to discuss homesickness by a camp worker, and enhanced training given to camp carers. All the campers were then asked to report on homesickness occurrence and severity during the camp. The findings suggest a decrease in the severity of homesickness in those who experienced the preventative programme of:-

"a combination of novelty reduction psycho education, social support, coping instruction, caregiver education, practice time away from home, and surrogate caregiver training..."

(Thurber, 2005, p.558).

Thurber (2005, 2007) argues that workers in residential settings, paediatricians and other health care professionals are well placed to assist families in understanding the prevention of homesickness, particularly in the case of short term planned

separations, such as summer camp or residential educational opportunities. Fisher and Cooper (1989) proposed a stress-management therapy for the homesick, which is directed at the feelings of the homesick and a positive focus on the new environment whilst Chartoff (1975) found that allowing telephone calls home helped to reduce homesickness. As homesickness is most often reported as occurring at the beginning and end of the day, and when engaged on mental and passive - as opposed to physical and active - tasks (Van Tilburg, *et al* , 1996) it may follow that these periods and activities should be carefully 'patrolled'. Van Tilburg *et al.* (1996) suggest that there are 'critical moments' and 'high risk' events, such as meal and bed times, that may trigger expressions of homesickness and so those people accompanying the homesick should be pre-emptive during these times.

In the dominant medicalised discourse of homesickness it is "often perceived as socially undesirable, which frequently leads to feelings of shame and withdrawal", (Van Tilburg, *et al* , 1996, p. 909). One effect of the medicalisation of homesickness may be that 'sufferers' are stigmatised. This medicalised discourse of homesickness invests power first in doctors, paediatricians, other health care professionals (Thurber, 2005, 2007) and homesickness therapists (Fisher and Cooper, 1989). Next it exerts power over those who are in *loco parentis* and who do the patrolling (Van Tilburg, *et al* , 1996), perhaps neglecting their own needs. Medicalised discourses of homesickness seem to position those away from home merely as weak, dependent sufferers, whilst their parents may sit at home worrying.

Away from home as a Rite of Passage.

Critics of the positioning of children and others who are missing home as homesickness 'sufferers' may liken such discourses to the development of the

therapy culture (Furedi, 2004). There is some suggestion within the psychological literature that homesickness may be considered normal. Van Tilburg *et al.* define homesickness as a "commonly experienced psychological state following leaving the home", (1996, p.903) and point out that it is commonly reported by people of all ages from all cultures and without gender bias. Bergsma (1963) cited in Van Tilburg *et al.*, (1996) has made a distinction between normal and pathological homesickness. He suggests that normal homesickness becomes pathological only in certain cases where other psychological and/or relational factors are present. According to the American Psychological Association (APA, 1994), if homesickness is not severe and does not hamper daily life (e.g. work, social activities) it has to be accepted as normal.

What society considers as 'normal' has been problematised by Foucault, who suggests that there is nothing normal in the social world. Rather, dominant discourses normalise certain practices. In his works on knowledge (Foucault, 1970, 1972) he seeks to explain how scientific discourses have worked to establish knowledge. Applying this approach to homesickness reveals that how homesickness is spoken of, written about, diagnosed and counselled, is not simply a description of homesickness, but is part of the process of constructing and normalising it.

Other discourses may construct 'homesickness' as a positive, necessary and formative state from which people emerge more resilient and self-knowing. For example, Waite, Davis and Brown (2006) found that the homesickness experienced by some children on a residential trip increased their feelings of self-reliance and confidence, and, significantly, did not prevent them wanting to return. Once it has

been de-medicalised, 'homesickness' may be considered part of the process of being away from home in the early years of life. In this case prevention and treatment may be inappropriate actions. For some, homesickness may be desirable.

So important in my data seems to be the process of taking children away from their homes and, in a sense, 'initiating' them into the practices of outdoor adventure and living away from home, that I consider the concept of rites of passage useful. Both Grant (2008) and Bell (2003) have written about rites of passage in outdoor learning, but the initiation rites van Gennep (1909/1960) discusses in chapter five of his seminal text on rites of passage is most useful in helping to provide a clear definition

Van Gennep makes a clear distinction between physiological and social puberty (1909/1960, p. 65). It is with his conceptualisation of 'social puberty' I engage here. In the context of residential outdoor education centres, the challenges that are set may include facing and over-coming fears (heights, water, ghosts) living with new people, encountering strange customs and unfamiliar social practices, and encountering and coping with homesickness. The classic narrative of any initiation rite follows three distinct phases (van Gennep, 1909/1960):-

- First the novice goes away from their home.
- Second s/he spends time with experts, often older, experienced members of the community who are familiar with the social practices the novice needs to encounter, and who prepare them to stand alone. Classically this is 'in the bush' or on 'walkabout'

- Finally, the initiated return bearing some mark to symbolise their newly-won maturity, which, in the traditional cultures investigated by van Gennep (1909/1960), are typically the cutting and piercing of their bodies.

The discourse of [children] going away from home as a rite of passage is in conflict with the discourse of medicalised homesickness. Whereas the latter positions children as weak sufferers, the rite of passage discourse positions children in more complex ways. At first the children are positioned as novices in a clearly defined social practice, but the productive power (MacLure, 2003) of this discourse eventually produces initiated adolescents.

3.2 The discursive practices of schools: performativity in schools and classrooms influenced by neo-Liberalism.

I now move on to critically engage with a smaller selection of literature that is relevant to what I consider important themes in my data. I focus here on the themes which I have identified in the data – namely, neo-Liberalism, performativity and schooling orthodoxies - and have selected literature that typifies other work that I consider relevant.

Foucault (1977) has likened schools to prisons. Of course, he did this in his examination of the ways in which institutions work, and how they exercise power; it is not to say an individual school resembles a prison. Foucauldian perspectives on schools and schooling (e.g. Devine, 2003) reveal these similarities. Partly this is the nature of schools as institutions, for "...there is always a danger that what people learn in institutional institutions is how to get on within those institutions," (Stables, 2005, p. 99). In a portrait of classroom discourse that ultimately praises teachers for

their skills in working productively within substantial constraints, Stables points to the following common features of classrooms.-

- Teachers do most of the talking, often not to individuals When teacher talk is addressed to an individual, they often are not looking at the person they are speaking to
- Teachers' talk is dominated by closed questions
- Children have limited speaker rights
- Most interchanges follow a highly distinctive pattern:- initiation (by the teacher); response (by a pupil); often abrupt feedback or evaluation (by the teacher)
- Teachers' language is full of technical terms
- Children are accountable almost solely to the teacher

(from Stables, 2005, pp 97-98).

3.2.1 School and classroom orthodoxies.

The current orthodoxy and advocated 'best practice' in English schools is for the teacher to organise most, if not all, aspects of a child's learning To organise learning requires first that learning be reified and treated as a material or concrete thing Nationally agreed and overly-prescriptive curricula and pedagogy, the trend towards outcome testing and the perceived influence of external inspections have all contributed to this reification.

Though Government promotes 'personalised learning', child-centred learning, with children passionately investigating problems that really interest them, is becoming a rarity (Hayes, 2007; Shepherd, 2007) Constructivism focussing on the active part the learner (child) has to play in the learning process (e.g Strauss and Quinn, 1997)

seems to be increasingly marginalised. Of even greater concern to Hayes (2007) is the current best practice mantra in English schools of teachers sharing their intended learning outcomes (often articulated in the bewildering language of the National Curriculum) with children. There can be few objections to teachers engaging in discussions with their pupils about what has been learnt. However, these practices may commit children to a passive role, and do not recognise that meaning and therefore learning is filtered and constructed through multiple discourses to which children contribute as much as adults. There may be no direct correspondence between a particular teaching method and desired outcome (Strauss and Quinn, 1997). Put another way, teachers may devise and articulate intended learning objectives for children, in their attempt to control learning, but what the child learns from the resulting experience may be quite different (Shepherd, 2007).

Hayes outlines the drawbacks of an over formalised school curriculum that squeezes children's learning into 'predetermined packets' of time to meet learning objectives (2007, p. 151). He sees outdoor learning as a possible antidote to this, yet there is evidence of schooling and classroom discourses beginning to creep into outdoor learning; examples of this phenomenon occur in my data and are discussed in Chapter 5.

3.2.2 Performativity a technology of control: how outdoor centres are becoming increasingly the subjects of control.

In Foucauldian terms, the measures that bring about the optimisation of efficient performance - audit, curricular control through a National Curriculum, pedagogic control through National Strategies and 'best practice' orthodoxies, surveillance through testing, the production of comparison tables, the publication of inspectorial reports - are technologies of control. These technologies of control have been characterised by Lyotard as performative practices (Lyotard, 1984; Usher, 2006). For Ball performativity is "a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation," (2004a, p.143). Whilst 'performativity' has been used otherwise in the literature (for example, Austin's (1962) work on the philosophy of language) it is Ball's (2003, 2004a) deployment of Lyotard's term that is most useful to my thesis.

The language of performativity is rife in schools. 'Impact', based upon the assumption that there exists a causal link between educational aims, objectives and pedagogy, and learning outcomes or benefits, became the 'holy grail' of late twentieth century state schooling in Britain. Similar language is being extended to outdoor programmes, opportunities and venues. For example, the DfES states that the educational benefits of outdoor learning can "improve academic achievement, provide a bridge to higher order learning.. reduce behaviour problems and improve attendance, stimulate, inspire and improve motivation [and] improve children's attitudes to learning, (DfES, 2006, p 4)

In Chapter 5 I suggest that there may be a danger of the influences of performativity and schooling practices narrowing the range of discourses available to the children, possibly to the detriment of their learning.

Two types of regulation, safety and education, control the functioning of residential outdoor education centres and performativity can be seen in both.

3.2.3 Performativity, teaching and learning.

Learning at outdoor centres in England that are owned by Local Authorities is audited by both the LA and Ofsted. Wild Country Hall is owned and financed by Anyshire County Council LA. The County Council claims to be committed to providing a high quality residential and educational facility available to schools and other groups within the county of Anyshire (Wild_Country_Hall, 2003). Anyshire operates three out of county centres: Wild Country Hall and two other centres in the north of England. Anyshire claims a long history of quality outdoor education. In outlining the benefits of participation in its outdoor centres, the Anyshire Outdoor Education Service emphasises both the personal and social development of children and that its centres cover "...a wide spread of National Curriculum and A level /GCSE courses," (Anyshire, 2009). Whilst there is information on the website about health and safety outdoors, there are no reports on the educational performance of its centres.

Ofsted was commissioned by the then DfES (now the DfE) to undertake an evaluation of the personal development aspects of outdoor education with specific focus on the work of outdoor education centres. The report (Ofsted, 2004) was based on audits of 15 outdoor centres. In gathering their evidence, inspectors held

discussions with heads of centre and staff from centres and schools. They also interviewed students, observed 62 preparatory and follow-up lessons and read documentation including curriculum plans and evaluations. The report concentrates on the opportunities provided for students of age 9-16 years, in outdoor education, linked to aspects of the National Curriculum in physical education (PE). The report makes six recommendations to centres and schools in order that they might "achieve further improvements in provision," of which three are framed in the language of performativity, (Ofsted, 2004, p. 6). These include developing:-

" the systems for evaluating the impact of provision on improving students' attitudes and achievements .make better use of assessment data improve the quality of teaching ..by ensuring all teaching takes sufficient account of students' responses and teachers' intervention guides their learning improve programme planning to ensure that students' residential experiences support their future work in the school curriculum,"

(Ofsted, 2004, p. 6, my italics)

Some of these performative measures seem to be the result of neo-Liberalism, which I discuss below

3.2.4 Performativity and safety management.

Following the Lyme Bay tragedy of 1993 when four teenagers died during a canoeing activity, safety in British outdoor education centres has been regulated by the AALA. Wild Country Hall is registered with AALA as licensed to provide specified activities under the following headings. kayaking, open canoeing, paddle surfing, improvised rafting, sailing, rock climbing, abseiling, sea level traversing, gorge scrambling, hill walking and mountaineering, mountain biking and caving (Wild_Country_Hall, 2003). Similar licensing arrangements exist in Australia, the USA and New Zealand. Bradford (2000) claims that the Lyme Bay events "re-invigorated the campaign to better regulate the safety of outdoor activity providers,

particularly those providing activities for school children" and so the stated aim of AALA licensing is to provide "...assurances to the public about the safety of those activity providers who have been granted a licence," (Bradford, 2000). In this way it is expected that young people will be able to continue to enjoy exciting and stimulating activities outdoors without being exposed to avoidable risks of death or disabling injury," (Asthon, 2010). Few would argue with the well meant underpinnings of such safety regulation, but it may lead some to complacency in the belief that, as practices have been audited and centres licensed, therefore they are deemed safe. Attention to regular assessment of risk may be neglected. This is an example of performativity, as the performance of the audit may have overtaken day to day assessment of risk as the most important activity.

Unfortunately, however, regulation, audit and inspection do not have a causal link with safety. Licensing may well give "assurances to the public" (Asthon, 2010), but it does not guarantee safety.

An example may be useful at this stage, and I will use the 2008 Mangatepopo tragedy in New Zealand where seven people died. Safety in New Zealand outdoor centres is regulated by Outdoors New Zealand which operates OutdoorsMark, the national outdoor safety quality assurance programme designed specifically for organisations involved in outdoor learning, and adventure activities (OutdoorsMark, 2007). On 15 April 2008 an inspector contracted by Outdoors New Zealand was in the process of undertaking a field audit at the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuit Centre, Tongariro (OPC), as part of a three yearly re-audit of the OutdoorsMark Standard held by the OPC. On the same day as the audit, a teacher and six pupils

who were based at the OPC died in a gorge walking activity in the Mangatepopo Stream

The OutdoorsMark report published after the incident did not raise any of the issues that resulted in the tragedy (Devonport, 2010, p. 19). Furthermore, evidence given to the coroner, and not disputed by him, seems to suggest that the attendance of an OutdoorsMark auditor may have actually contributed to the tragedy by distracting staff at the centre and delaying the sending out of a search and rescue party. The evidence of the Centre Manager states that "the presence of the Outdoors Mark auditor coincided with the return of [the centre's Field Manager] from annual leave and was a distraction ." (Devonport, 2010, p. 18). This is supported by the evidence of the auditor herself. She says that she met the Field Manager "... to have a bit of a debrief about how things had gone. At that point, he was sitting down and he was a bit distracted because [the instructor leading the gorge trip] hadn't come back and it had been raining quite a lot and I could see he was getting increasingly nervous so in the end I said to him "look your mind's not on this and neither is mine" ...so I said I'll write up my report and we'll just leave it there," (Devonport, 2010, p. 19). It was only at this point, in other words only once he was released by the auditor, that the Field Manager set about investigating why the trip was late back and sending a search and rescue party. Thus the performance of the audit seemed to take precedence over the safety of the group, which was the purpose of the audit.

This is an extreme case. It demonstrates, however, some of the drawbacks of performativity in terms of assessable safety measures. In this case it seems that the safety audit was conducted as performance, attendance at the centre, observation of

staff there, discussion with the Field Manager and report writing. It did not expose any of the issues that subsequently were found to have contributed to the tragedy. It may, though, have been a factor in the distraction of the Field Manager from his normal duties and practices (in promptly sending out a search and rescue party) and thus may have contributed to the un-safe practices fore-grounded by the coroner in his recommendations (Devonport, 2010, pp. 36-37).

3.2.5 Neo-Liberalism.

Embedded within the works of Foucault is the idea that sometimes words are used so much, and in so many ways, that we may no longer know what they mean. This idea has been accepted by Ball (2010) who applies it to neo-Liberalism. I have chosen to use the term neo-Liberalism to help explain the widespread and pervasive performativity in schools and the Wild Country Hall centre. I do this in the acceptance that neo-Liberalism is a complex and in some ways inadequate term. Neo-Liberalism labels those economic and social policies that minimise the role of the state in favour of the private business sector, it is a term most often used by the political left to criticise the policies and ideologies of modern governments that aim at reducing the role of the state by fostering decentralisation and local and individual autonomy in a modern turn to *laissez-faire*. There are substantial contradictions in the concept of 'neo-Liberalism' in its resemblance to *laissez-faire* when used in relation to education. For example, whilst neo-Liberalism focuses upon decentralisation and local and individual autonomy, English education since the 1980s has featured a highly centralised and prescriptive curriculum and the central control of pedagogy, monitored and surveilled by Ofsted, the state auditors - between 1997 and 2010 the role of the state in education has increased rather than decreased. Recognising these tensions, Ball (2010) suggests that we may now be living in a 'post neo-Liberal

age', where state neo-Liberalism flourishes; where it is almost impossible to separate the public from the private, and where new theorisation may be needed

Neo-Liberalism has also come into wide use in cultural studies to describe social, cultural, and political practices and policies that use the language of free market capitalism, but accommodate an active state role. It is this sense of neo-Liberalism that I have found particularly useful. When used in this way neo-Liberalism includes government policies for education and training - and public debates regarding standards and changed funding regimes - that incorporate suggestions that private schools can be established and run on a 'for profit' basis and the introduction of open enrolment and public choice systems through per-capita funding and deregulated admission procedures that encourage schools to compete for student enrolments and parents and students to see themselves as consumers of education with the possibilities of free choice (Ball, Bowe and Gerwitz, 1996, Beach and Sernhede, 2010)

Such practices have been at work on and in schools in capitalist societies since at least the 1980s. They have been observed in Australia (e.g. Davies, 2005; Davies and Bansel, 2007) and Scandinavia (e.g. Beach and Dovemark, 2009, Englund, 2004 [discussed in Beach and Sernhede, 2010]) as well as the UK (Ball *et al* , 1996; Ball, 2003, 2004a). Neo-Liberal practices characterise education with calls for greater efficiency and effectiveness, an oppressive state language in which audit is sovereign and critique and social responsibility destroyed (Davies, 2005), and by moves to measure and compare schools, allegedly in order to facilitate individual

choice. The results of these practices include making education a market place, learning a commodity and the learner a product.

Opponents of these practices (e.g. Bourdieu, 1998; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998) have argued that they have affected the lives of teachers (Ball, 2003; Goodson, 2010) and contributed to under-achievement of children (Goodson, 2010), and have argued that other visions of education and schooling are not only possible but desirable (e.g. Wrigley, 2003, 2007). Neo-Liberalism has led to the widespread use in England of school 'league tables' reporting examination outcomes to compare school performance; target-driven performance management for teachers and school managers, and a focus on impact in school inspections.

Applying the term neo-Liberalism to the period from the 1980s to the present, tends to label Conservative, Labour and Con-Lib educational policies together, when these governments had very different underpinning philosophies (e.g. privatisation, raising standards, social justice). It may be argued that the policies of the Labour Governments between 1997 and 2010 were substantially different to the preceding policies of Thatcher and Major, or the succeeding policies of the Con-Lib coalition, and that they indeed represented a 'third way' in education policy. Certainly, the policies of these three governments have different foundations. The neo-Liberal policies of the Thatcher era were substantially based on capitalist free-market doctrine, which may have returned to some degree since 2010. Policy in the period 1997-2010, however, was motivated by the philosophies of social justice and equal opportunity. Some on the political left (e.g. Chitty, 2007; Chitty and Dunford, 1999; T. Wood, 2010), however, detect little substantial difference between the education

policies of the governments in power between 1979 and 2010, even though the rhetoric - or indeed the intent - sounded otherwise, and point out that despite Blairite oratory about third way socio-economics, there has been much continuity in the policies of Conservative, Labour and Con-Lib coalition governments between 1980 and 2010. For example, Chitty's description of education under Blair reads like a description of Reagan or Thatcherite education policy. He writes about the -

“ ..divisive nature of Blair's education policies, with education being seen as a market commodity driven by consumer demands, and parental choice of schools being facilitated by greater teacher accountability and the publication of league tables of test and examination performance ”

(Chitty, 2007, p. 205)

Chitty argues that the Blair government was determined to carry forward most of the Conservative Party education agenda “ even if the language used was calculated to hide the true extent of this continuity,” (2007, p. 204). So a Conservative government brought the National Curriculum and Ofsted, which were continued by the Labour government of 1997-2010. More recently, continuity has been maintained. The Blair/Brown Labour government brought in Academies (in an attempt to raise standards in so called failing schools by freeing them from Local Authority (LA) control) and these were extended by the Con-Lib coalition (to allow more freedom from LA control for high achieving schools), which has added to them the notion of Free Schools.

At the school level, the outcomes of the policies of these governments – parental choice of schools, inspection regimes and school league tables designed to inform parents about school effectiveness, testing, imposed curricula and pedagogy – may seem very similar to teachers, children and parents.

The discursive practices of neo-Liberalism have become dominant in many areas of education in developed countries and are relevant in my thesis because Wild Country Hall is working within neo-Liberal discourses. Gibson (2009) has summarised the arguments which claim that neo-Liberalism in Britain has colonised or hijacked the ideals of inclusion in education, and a similar phenomenon can be observed in outdoor learning. Examples of this process are contained within the Government's Manifesto for education outside the classroom (DfES, 2006). The Manifesto was produced in 2006, influenced by the widespread claims regarding the efficacy of outdoor learning reviewed above (e.g. Hattie, *et al.*, 1997; McKenzie, 2000; Rickinson, *et al.*, 2004) and in response to concerns about a risk-aversion developing in society and education (e.g. Furedi, 1997; Shaw, 2004) which was thought to be leading to a sedentary approach to learning that perhaps does not suit all children. The Manifesto was produced as a well-meant reaction to this and presents an argument for outdoor learning as an entitlement for all, stating:

"learning outside the classroom is about *raising achievement* through an *organised*, powerful approach to learning in which direct experience is of prime importance",

(DfES, 2006, my italics).

Thus, outdoor learning has become prescribed as an entitlement for all, but is also now defined in terms of school effectiveness, providing an example of how government policy and agenda are quick to colonise the language and territory of others. This move presents the risk that schooling orthodoxies, driven by neo-Liberal discourse may become embedded in the practices of outdoor centres.

More recently the House of Commons Select Committee on Children, Schools and Families called for learning outside the classroom to be made an entitlement within

the National Curriculum and thus become subjected to Ofsted's school inspections (UK Parliament, 2010, paragraphs 25 and 43). The Committee also recommended a further accountability measure, that the DCSF (the Department for Education (DfE) since May 2010) should include pupils' access to such activities in the School Report Card (UK Parliament, 2010, paragraph 25).

Whilst LA outdoor centres are subjected to inspections by the LA, performance management, audit and account that places massive importance on quantifiable outcomes, such as the SAT results emphasised by Dismore and Bailey (2005) and the improvement in National examinations fore-grounded by Christie (2004), the voluntary sector has not escaped neo-Liberal colonisation. For example, the Scouts website states that "taking part in a residential or day programme will broadly meet the overall aims of the National Curriculum as well as some specific subject areas". This claim is followed by a list of 28 activities linked to Key Stages two and three (Scouts, 2010) and the Scouts "teacher zone" contains links to the National Curriculum and Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003). Similarly, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme's website includes reference to impact research and meeting Government education agenda (DofE, 2010).

3.3 Discourses of childhood.

Doing research with children, especially research that has tried to investigate sensitive issues such as fear and homesickness, raised particular methodological and ethical issues which are substantively covered in Chapter 4. When considering these issues, however, I also engaged with a wider literature relating to the vagaries and elusiveness of conceptualisations of childhood which I discuss here.

The first issue to be addressed is what is meant by the terms 'child' and 'childhood'?

The concepts are confusing. Stables points out societal inconsistencies, in that:-

"...we attribute fully human status to our new born babies. We attribute the status of child to the seventeen-year-old at work (perhaps to a twenty-one-year old...where the age of majority remains at twenty one)"

(2005, p. 79).

Jenks foregrounds the socially constructed child, arguing "there is no essential child but always one that is built up through constitutive practices", (2000, p. 67).

Accepting that meaning is constructed from discourse, different discourses of childhood need to be discussed in order to understand childhood.

Greig, Taylor, and MacKay (2007) base their work upon a view of children as special; occupying a distinct, vulnerable place in society and arguing strongly in favour of the right of the child to a voice. A critical examination of this view of children and childhood suggests that it tends to ignore two important factors:-

- First, as Muñoz points out, discourses of childhood innocence and vulnerability are largely a "westernised construct – assuming that childhood involves the opportunity to play and neglecting to incorporate notions of toil, work or responsibility. It is also a largely white, able-bodied construct," (Muñoz, 2009, p.5). Whilst Greig, *et al.*'s (2007) favoured discourse of childhood may occupy a dominant place in affluent, twenty-first century societies, historically childhood was constructed differently as children were expected to work; for example, as sweeps or in coal mines or factories (Hendrick, 2000). Childhood is also constructed very differently in many areas

of the world nowadays where children are expected, or required, to work or to beg to support their families and have, generally, much responsibility at an early age. For some children who are expected to be carers for their parents, this is so in 21st century Britain.

- Second, other groups of people (e.g. the elderly, the ill, those with learning difficulties) are also 'special' and vulnerable. Indeed, it could be argued that all human beings are special.

There is also a contradiction in the stance taken by Greig *et al* (2007) in that discourses that position children as vulnerable, defenceless, naive, innocent and in need of protection from potentially malevolent adults, tend also to empower adults as the protectors and guardians of children which may militate against the child's right to a voice. For example, the policy on consent advocated by the ethics committee of the University of Plymouth, Faculty of Technology is that the only consent needed to involve children in social research is that of the responsible adult, parent or teacher.

Additionally discourses of childhood innocence have suffered from a number of high profile cases where children have committed 'adult' crimes. For example, Mary Bell was found guilty of killing two toddlers in 1968 when she was aged 11 (Seamark and Sims, 2010), in 1993 the toddler James Bulger was murdered by two 10 year old boys (Morrison, 2003), and in 2009 two 10 year old boys were convicted of the attempted rape of an eight year old girl (Coombs, 2009).

There are other discourses of childhood and adolescence, ignored by Greig *et al* (2007), which need to be considered. For example -

- The discourse of childhood as privilege (children are not expected to work, receiving free education, free health care and discounted public services). At a family level, some children may not be expected to play their part in household duties.
- The discourse of childhood 'innocence' is often connected with nature, an imaginary rural ideal, and the countryside (Jones, 2007; Muñoz, 2009).
- The discourses that tend to position young people as malevolent. The 'wild' or 'dangerous' child/youth (e.g. Valentine, 1996) - seen universally as abusive, anti-social, beer drinking, drug taking and thus subjected to ASBOS (anti-social behaviour orders), prohibition and curfew.
- Valentine (2004) highlights how societal fears, especially in the light of the murder of two children in Soham, 2002, have worked against the discourse of the malevolent child, in favour of the discourse of wild children in need of protection.
- The discourse of troubled childhood, where young people are seen as troubled, misunderstood, not listened to and discriminated against.

The social world is complex, and these discourses exist and compete side by side. As Matthews and Lamb (2004) show, children within contemporary society have been cast as simultaneously a group to be protected and feared. Each of these discourses positions children and adults, and helps to shape their personal and collective identities. Whilst personal identities are characterised by diversity, discourses tend to form commonalities (of childhood) and are formed by those same commonalities. Christensen and James (2000b) have usefully pointed out that as well as the commonality described by age and life-course stage, there is also a large

degree of diversity embedded within childhood, which varies both within and across cultures

Foucault would encourage those interested in discourses of childhood to be continually cognisant of the power that discourse facilitates and denies. When discussing the discursive practices of Wild Country Hall (Chapter 5) I also consider power in this Foucauldian sense.

3.4 Overview of tensions and gaps in the literature.

In this section I set out to locate my work within this literature. I make clear where I see gaps and tensions in the literature, defining where my area of questioning, research and findings can contribute to existing knowledge.

- The relatively weak attention given to learning theory in outdoor learning literature (Rickinson, *et al.*, 2004). My fight with familiarity has focussed my research onto perspectives of learning outdoors
- The largely uncritical acceptance of 'common sense' perspectives of learning (Hager and Hodgkinson, 2009) and the corresponding lack of attention given to socio-cultural theories of learning To counter this I propose learning as discursive positioning (developed from the work of Davies, 1990, 2004, Davies and Harré, 1990)
- The largely uncritical acceptance of experiential learning as a pedagogic model (e.g. Beard and Wilson, 2002; Dennison and Kirk, 1990, Exeter, 2001).
- A possibly narrow view of personal experience derived from the essentialising of self (e.g. Ewert, (1983); Gibbs and Bunyan, (1997); Swarbrick, *et al* (2004)

as opposed to a wider, more situated view that comes from a constructionist perspective.

- The focus on research from the perspective of outcome rather than process and the consequent marginalisation of participant voice (Barrett and Greenaway, 1995). I counter this with a strong attention on the views and accounts of the children who took part in my research.
- The acceptance of a medicalised discourse of homesickness as generally undesirable, and the desire to prevent and treat it (Van Tilburg, *et al.*, 1996), rather than accepting and valuing this phenomenon as an important learning experience and possibly a rite of passage into adolescence.
- In so far as they might damage outdoor learning centres, there is the colonisation of centres and outdoor programmes by the neo-Liberal government agenda, performativity and discourses of schools and schooling.

3.4.1 Summary, how my research questions have developed from the literature

Zink and Burrows examine the concept of "doing research with Foucault" (2006, pp. 46-47), in other words, carrying out research that is underpinned by some of the critical conceptualisations that reading Foucault introduces. One of the challenges of undertaking research informed by Foucauldian critical theory is, they suggest, resisting the temptation to seek 'the answer', because no single answer, no universal form or method exists in Foucault's conceptualisation. Instead of hunting for all-convincing answers, they suggest researchers whose work is underpinned by Foucauldian conceptualisations, as mine is to some degree, pay close attention to the "specificities of the particular moment and location" (Zink and Burrows, 2006, p. 46). I am trying to better understand learning, the making sense of those experiences which occurred within a particular 'anthropological place' (Augé, 2008).

This place may also be conceptualised as an 'imagined and discursive space' (Stables, 2003); Wild Country Hall, the countryside surrounding it and the adventure and residential discursive practices that occur there.

I am also making an attempt to avoid the research approaches I have criticised above, investigations epitomised in Bailey *et al* , (2003) and Dismore and Bailey (2005) that focus on outcomes at the expense of the experiences of participants. I do this by foregrounding the observations and opinions of the participants, especially the children, who took part in my research. Thus, I am also responding to the call of Barrett and Greenaway (1995) for research that focuses on young people and their accounts

3.4.2 Research questions.

My overarching research question was formed during the research process in an inductive and iterative way:-

How do the discursive practices of a residential outdoor education centre contribute to children's learning?

From this I extrapolate the following three sub-questions:

1. What are the discourses at Wild Country Hall and how are they different to schooling discourses?
2. How might discursive positioning be used as a perspective on outdoor learning?
3. How might neo-Liberal discursive practices, including performativity and current schooling orthodoxies have affected the pedagogic practices at this centre?

Chapter 4: Methodology

"No longer is the social world.. to be taken for granted as merely out there full of neutral, objective, observable facts. Nor are native points of view to be considered plums hanging from trees, needing only to be plucked by fieldworkers and passed onto consumers. Rather, social facts including native points of view are human fabrications, themselves subject to social inquiry as to their origins,"

(van Maanen, 1988, p 93)

"In short, anthropological writings are themselves interpretations, and, second and third order ones to boot. They are, thus, fictions, fictions, in the sense that they are "something made," "something fashioned" – the original meaning of fictō- not that they are false, un-factual, or merely "as if" thought experiments,"

(Geertz, 1973, p 15).

4.1 Introduction

I understand methodology as the theorising of those philosophical and epistemological assumptions that underpin the methods chosen for any research project. I selected the quote from van Maanen (1988) to begin this chapter because it summarises very well the view of social research, especially ethnographic research, I had gained by the time I had finished my PhD project.

This chapter is divided into three substantive parts.

- First, (4.2) under the heading of methodology, I explain the philosophical, epistemological and pragmatic reasons why I chose an inductive and qualitative approach to my social inquiry into the origins of the 'human fabrications', 'social facts' and 'native points of view' (Van Maanen, 1988) that manifested themselves during my contact with Wild Country Hall and in the period of follow up research.

- Second, in part 4.3, I provide a detailed explanation of the methods I used, which also includes a description of how my research was undertaken. I outline the ethical and logistical process of how I gained entry to the field, how I went about generating a body of data, explain what problems I encountered, and how I overcame these.
- Finally I move on to write about the analysis and representation of data in 4.4, where I explain why I decided to present much of the data as a data-rich narrative and detail how this narrative was constructed.

Throughout, I discuss the basis upon which the research can be considered robust, trustworthy and useful.

4.2 Methodology: philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the research. In this section I explain the philosophical, theoretical and pragmatic reasons why I chose to carry out my research in the way that I did. In this thesis I am seeking to understand the experiences of participants. I am most interested in their accounts - what van Maanen (1988) terms their 'human fabrications' - of the learning processes embedded within the adventure activities and residential experience of Wild Country Hall Outdoor Education Centre, and the effects of these experience on them.

Because these experiences and processes were unknown to me before I began the research, it was difficult for me to know what theoretical constructs to apply in order to begin to understand them. To address this difficulty I considered deductive and inductive approaches to investigation.

Deductive approaches move from generalities to particularities, from grand or established theory, to particular cases and instances. This is the hypothetico-deductive model, within the scientific paradigm, described by Robson (2002, p. 18). In this model the researcher first develops hypotheses from established theory, then collects and analyses data in order to try to falsify the hypothesis. Hypotheses may be falsified by particular observations or experiments. For so long as they have not been falsified they may be considered acceptable. Popper (1968) is best known both for articulating this scientific form of investigation, and for problematising it, for there is a "chasm between what science purports to do and what it actually does," (Crotty, 1998, p. 30). Popper's (1968) work has illuminated ambiguities in the scientific paradigm. For example, Darwin did not sail to the Galapagos Islands armed with a hypothesis of evolution generated from theory, nor did Fleming, Florey or Chaim initially set out to falsify the hypothesis of antibiotic medicine.

Research undertaken within the scientific, hypothetico-deductive model tends to consider the researcher as a distant, impersonal figure uninvolved in the research process, one who operates in an objective and value-free way (Bryman, 2004), putting forward findings as established facts and generalising findings from one context to others.

The hypothetico-deductive model seemed alien to my research which is a small scale case study from which generalisations are problematic, and where I am involved as a participant in aspects of the research. Furthermore, the objectivism and realism underpinning scientific approaches seem to be rather naive stances to take in the context of social research situations that involve discursive practices and

personal narratives, their ambiguities, complexities and contradictions. This way of working did not seem to have an application to the social field I wished to investigate, nor did I have hypotheses to falsify. For these reasons I turned away from deductive thinking and towards an inductive approach which I consider far more suitable.

Inductive reasoning and Grounded Theory.

Verification had become one of the key hallmarks of the trustworthiness of hypothetico-deductive approaches by the time Glaser and Strauss (1967) were developing their work on Grounded Theory. Verification, they claim, was then the "keynote" of sociology, (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 3). Grounded Theory may be seen as an alternative to the hypothetico-deductive model for social research, as it works inductively; from the ground up.

Put simply, the inductive approach is the diametric opposite of deductive working; it means moving from the particular to the general. Precise questions, the generation of insights and explanations, and new knowledge building are developed through the research process. Working within an inductive paradigm means beginning with interests and hunches, rather than with precise questions. Generated data aids the understanding of the people, phenomena and ideas under investigation, and new knowledge is constructed from these data. In adopting an approach that seeks to construct research questions as well as insights and meanings from the data generated, I have found the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) useful in developing my understanding of inductive approaches and other aspects of methodology that merits discussion here. Their work is well known and, rather than explaining it, I concentrate on identifying the similarities and chief differences between their work and mine.

Strauss and Corbin say ". a researcher cannot enter an investigation with a list of preconceived concepts, a guiding theoretical framework, or a well thought out design," (1998, p 34) This is so, yet the notion of entering into a situation without imposing some aspect of (at least informal) theory upon it is problematic, indeed it may never be possible, as all perceptions and understandings are to an extent shaped by prior assumptions and those discourses that have formed them. What I have tried to do is recognise and be transparent about this possibility, as part of a rigorous research process.

Qualitative inquiry: miners and travellers in the social world.

Strauss and Corbin define qualitative research as "the kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification", (1990, p 17) and outline three reasons for using it -

- The nature of the research problem.
- The conviction of the researcher based upon research experience
- The influence of the discipline the researcher adheres to, or their philosophical views

I will consider each of these reasons separately and discuss to what extent each helps explain my reasons for choosing qualitative research

Of the three reasons proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) choosing qualitative research because of the nature of the research problem to be investigated seems to me to be the most compelling. I felt that a qualitative approach that would reveal and help me to understand participants' accounts of their experiences, and the accounts of others (parents, teachers) of how children may have changed because of the

experiences, was by far the best way to investigate learning in a residential outdoor education centre. To begin to address my research question it is necessary to investigate narratives of participants who take part in residential outdoor programmes. This will reveal the meanings they attribute to their experiences and differences between the narratives of adults and children can be compared and investigated. A qualitative approach to research appears to me to be the most useful and appropriate because narratives and meanings can only be explored in all their richness in qualitative ways. This is not to argue that quantitative approaches could not have been used; only that such research would have been vastly different.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that the conviction of the researcher based upon research experience is another legitimate reason to adopt a particular research approach. Certainly, some researchers have tended to adopt particular methods which they then repeat and build careers upon. I suspect, however, that the appropriateness of their methodological approach, the synergy between research problem and method, is far more important to them than any favoured approach. As researchers successfully engage in research they may well become increasingly expert in, and predisposed towards, particular research approaches. I see this as a perfectly legitimate situation, but consider that they do so first and foremost because of the appropriateness of the method.

Finally, Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that the discipline the researcher adheres to, or their philosophical views influences the selection of research approach. A Foucauldian analysis of this would suggest that whilst the individual appears to select her way of engaging in intellectual work, and seems to have agency, the

selected discipline is simultaneously disciplining the way she works (Foucault, 1972) I came to the disciplines of education and ethnographic social research, from the discipline of history. History, apart from some economic histories, generally tends to favour qualitative approaches to the analysis of narrative, textual data. I acknowledge that this may well have disciplined and shaped the way I undertake research, and may help to explain my choice of qualitative methodology.

Consistent with a constructionist approach, I have tried to adopt the use of appropriate terms throughout the thesis. In realist conceptualisations of research a certain vocabulary is used: thus researchers may write about their 'collection' or 'selection' of data. To collect or select data implies that they are already there, and also implies that a skilful researcher may be able to gather these data in uncontaminated form: hence the term 'raw data'. I have found this vocabulary, consistent with a realist stance or perspective, to be alien and unhelpful to my research. I have tried to avoid using these terms. I have tried instead to make consistent use of the terms *data generation* and *data construction*.

Kvale (1996) uses two metaphors to explain the different philosophical starting points a qualitative researcher might come from: miner and traveller. For the researcher as miner, the data are there in the ground waiting to be dug up, uncontaminated by the miner. The miner metaphor relates to a realist understanding of data, it is there waiting to be exploited. In the traveller metaphor the researcher is a traveller on a journey that leads to a story being told upon return. Crucially, the traveller converses with those she meets and helps construct the story, thus shaping her own and other's lives in the process, (Kvale, 1996, pp. 3-5). In Kvale's (1996) examples, both

miner and traveller are metaphors for qualitative interviewers. The principles also work at a philosophical level. The miner metaphor sits most comfortably within an objective, positivist, realist understanding of the world, whereas the traveller metaphor is consistent with interpretive and constructionist views of the social world. Kvale's (1996) traveller metaphor most accurately defines the philosophical approach to the research that I took.

None of this is meant to convey the impression that I do not value quantitative research for answering some research questions. Nor that I feel qualitative research is any better than quantitative research, or vice versa. I have selected a research approach which I think is consistent with my philosophical values and constructionist perspective, and one that seems appropriate to answering the research questions listed at the end of Chapter 2.

4.2.1 Ethnography.

I now move on to explain why I chose ethnography as my main method of constructing data based on observations of participants at the Wild Country Hall centre. Ethnography enabled me to enter the field with embryonic ideas about research questions rather than precisely formulated questions and hypotheses. Importantly, the time in the field necessitated by ethnographic method – but absent from other qualitative methodological approaches – allowed my thinking to mature whilst I was still involved with Wild Country Hall, the participants and data. Ethnography allows – demands – researchers to develop their ideas during the data generation phase. In ethnography there is a constant iteration between data generation - analysis of data - interim theorisation - more data generation - etc.

I do not claim ethnography to be better than any other research method. It is, however, highly consistent with the site of my research – a residential outdoor education centre – and the areas of outdoor learning I was interested in and which were developed into research questions. Ethnography – with its imperative for time spent at the centre engaged in participant observation – was a totally appropriate method to investigate the discursive practices of Wild Country Hall, how these had been affected by neo-Liberal agenda, and how they worked to position individual identities

Ethnography offers a particular perspective on creating knowledge which has strengths and weaknesses, both of which I discuss now. Much of the ethnographic literature is situated in realist discourse. It talks, for example, of research “that gets close to the lived experience of participants in social settings”, (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004, p. 536) or “captures and records the voices of lived experience”, (Denzin, 1994, p. 83). Seen from a constructionist perspective this discourse of ‘lived experience’ is problematic since it assumes that what is said and done in one social setting (the naturally occurring research site) is of a higher status, is more real, than what is said in another social setting (the interview). I reject this assumption. I consider the status of my ethnographic observations equal to data generated from my archive search and my interviews (data from the centre’s archives and interviews are included as appendices to provide readers with the opportunity of becoming more closely familiar with the data). All these data are constructed.

The advantages and strengths of ethnography.

Robson (2002) suggests that a major advantage of observation as a technique is its directness and lack of artificiality. Robson’s (2002) assertion ‘may lead to the

assumption that 'directness' is desirable because it places the researcher closer to reality, closer to the truth of what took place; and that 'artificiality' may be replaced by authenticity. I discount this assumption and prefer to say that the narratives I read, observed and listened to, and the meanings I attach to these, are discursively constructed.

I decided that an appropriate way of trying to understand these discourses was by immersing myself in the life of the Wild Country Hall centre, and to some extent becoming a participant. There are many kinds of participants at Wild Country Hall: centre teaching and instructing staff, centre support staff, visiting teachers, classroom assistants and parent helpers, visiting children. I immersed myself in the life of the centre by arriving before each visiting school and departing after they left. I ate with the visiting school, took part in the activities with them, I administered first aid to an injured child when I was the only qualified first aider present, I sat up till very late at night drinking wine and talking to visiting staff waiting until the last child had gone to sleep, and I slept in a centre dormitory - except in November 2004, when with Hilly Edge Primary School the centre was full, the Yurt in use, and I slept in a tent in Wild Country Hall's grounds.

The extent to which I was successful in resembling a participant is reflected in the following anecdote. I recall one day, when bidding farewell to a group of children who were leaving the centre, a child asking me, "what are you going to do now, Tony?" When I replied that I was going to go home to my family, she said, in a surprised voice "Oh! Don't you live here at Wild Country Hall?" This perhaps illustrates the extent to which I became 'part of the furniture' of the centre in the eyes of some of

the participants. Immersion of this nature can help overcome one of the major disadvantages of observation as a data generation method, the extent to which an observer affects the situation under observation. By being at the centre for the whole time the children are there, they may have become so accustomed to my presence that they act as if I were not there. Perhaps there is no way of knowing if this is case or not, and it can only apply to the children.

For the centre staff I was a novelty and very likely did affect their behaviour. I gained the impression that, following the pilot visit I was generally trusted and of use to them. For example, once I was asked to take charge of a group of children on the beach whilst two centre staff went into the sea to try to find a lost waterproof video camera; and once I was asked to supervise a group for a short time whilst one of the centre staff returned to the beach to pick up a rope he had forgotten. For visiting adults, it is difficult to say. One reason for me avoiding the use of a clipboard, or notebook, was so as not to be seen in the inspectorial role that teachers seem generally to reject, and, hopefully, thereby appearing less conspicuous. But there must always be at least the possibility that what I have observed has been affected by my presence.

The ethnography I have conducted is unlike the traditional, anthropological ethnographic studies such as those outlined by Holmes and Marcus (2005) where the researcher was trying to understand the mores of the society s/he was investigating, a society very different from the researcher's own (e.g. Malinowski, 1928/1961, Rabinow, 1977). I am fundamentally a part of the wider society the participants of my research come from. We have much in common, share a common

language and culture, and whilst I have striven not to be complacent about this, and recognise the more subtle differences and culturally specific phenomena, this makes it possible to spend less time in the field whilst constructing useful data.

There were also logistical reasons for my choice of ethnography. Wild Country Hall is a four hour drive from Oxford (where I was based when I began the study) and two and a half hours from my home, making short visits impractical. Schools visit the centre for five days and board there, as it is a residential centre. It would more practical and more sustainable for me to visit, and stay for a week at a time.

Jeffrey and Troman (2004) have argued that funding bodies, seeking quick completion, often see ethnographies as unlikely to satisfy 'value for money' criteria. They go on to suggest that nowadays it is only the PhD student who can afford the luxury of ethnographic study. This may help to explain why ethnography seems to be rather thinly represented in the outdoor and adventure education literature, exceptions including McCulloch's ethnographic work carried out on a sail training vessel (McCulloch, 2002, 2004, 2007) and Stan's study of an outdoor education centre (Humberstone and Stan, 2009a, 2009b; Stan, 2008, 2009). I see my thesis adding to the literature in this respect.

Ethnography has a number of advantages for the qualitative researcher:-

- Ethnography seems to be a most useful method when taking an inductive approach which is based on interest and hunches rather than hypotheses. Contact with participants in their setting encourages question formulation.

- Ethnography facilitates the researcher to observe phenomena that participants may not be minded to raise or disclose in an interview situation
- As ethnography involves contact with participants and data through immersion in a setting over a sustained period of time, it seems to me to provide a most appropriate method for investigating the complexities of learning at a residential outdoor centre
- Time in the field allows the ethnographer to iterate between observations and analysis of their data, this time factor allows the generation of deeper, more complex questioning which the ethnographer can build into their ongoing observations.

The limitations of ethnography.

Ethnography in 'natural' settings has been seen as an essentially neo-Imperialist research method (Gupta and Ferguson, 1996) because it is the product of unnatural and 'colonial' relationships. This is very much a criticism of ethnographic fieldwork in particular situations. For example, it may be the case in (traditional) field work in developing countries or (modern) fieldwork in deprived, domestic inner cities (Angrosino, 2005). As such I do not feel this criticism applies to my work.

The classic anthropological ethnographic model necessitates the investment of considerable amounts of time in the field. For example, Rabinow (1977) spent over a year in Morocco doing his fieldwork. Achieving this may be problematic for some researchers (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004) and as a part-time PhD student, I would have found this impossible. To address this problem whilst remaining faithful to ethnographic methodology, I have adopted a combination of Jeffrey and Troman's (2004) 'compressed time mode' and 'recurrent' ethnographies. Compressed time

mode ethnography is when a researcher inhabits a research site almost permanently for anything from a few days to a month. Recurrent ethnography involves a number of visits during which the researcher is able to "use the data as a comparison with previous research visits" (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004, p.545). I made six visits in all, each visit lasting for five days. I inhabited the research site on each visit, and my iterative approach to data analysis meant that I was able to use themes constructed from the data to inform subsequent observations.

The literature alerted me to the danger of 'going native' (Delamont, 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). This is a perceived drawback of immersion that makes allusions to the anthropological origins of ethnography; becoming so much a part of the life of the setting that researchers may forget the purpose of their research. I worked hard not to allow this to happen, and I found that the iterative nature of my analysis aided this. In other words, because my time in the field was punctuated by periods during which I was transcribing, reading and analysing data, I was consistently reminded of my purpose as a researcher.

'Going native', in the context of my research, might be conceptualised as siding with the adults in the centre (centre staff and visiting teachers and adult helpers). I feel I have successfully avoided or overcome this potential drawback. For example, I explain below my general discomfort with the way adults have constructed the pedagogy of Wild Country Hall, particularly some of the sedentary sessions (Chapter 5), and my particular discomfort at the behaviour of one adult who felt it acceptable to read aloud, and make fun of, postcards written by children (5.3.2).

Then there were issues of sufficiency. How many people should I observe, in what contexts and for how long? Answers to which were largely dictated by the context and nature of the residential centre and the groups attending, and by my satisfaction that I eventually had enough data to work with.

There were issues of familiarity, discussed above in my introduction. In the early days of the research I attempted to make the strange familiar through continued observations, by transcribing and reading my notes, continually trying to make sense of observations and testing provisional understandings on subsequent visits. My fight against familiarity (Delamont, 2002, p. 46) in the later days of the research was accomplished by asking new questions of the data, and of myself.

There was the issue of the proliferation of observation data which need some form of organisation *in situ* (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004), but done in the knowledge that observation is sometimes not possible for ethical reasons. A particular problem occurred in my research setting where there are aspects of residential life that I, as an adult male researcher, could not gain access to. For example, dormitory life is framed by participants as an important aspect of their residential experience, but is not possible for me to observe. Other methods were needed to illuminate such aspects of the experience (and these are outlined below).

Notwithstanding these critiques of ethnography, it was still an appropriate method for my research.

The importance of memory in recording ethnographic data.

During each visit to Wild Country Hall I made observations of activities from early morning until late at night. The data made from these observations are vitally important to the research. One problem I had was recording the data and I will now discuss the pragmatic and philosophical background to this problem, and its solution.

Delamont (2008) argues that any field work is only as good as the field notes that underpin it, and suggests that notes "are only as good as the way they are written, written up and analysed" (2008, p. 47). Hammersley and Atkinson liken ethnography done with inadequate note making to using an expensive camera with poor quality film (1995, p. 175). Walford, reporting on the way four respected ethnographers (Paul Connolly, Sara Delamont, Bob Jeffrey and Lois Weis) go about writing their notes, supports this and emphasises the need for "copious field notes" when producing "good ethnography" (2009, p. 117). After two visits to Wild Country Hall, however, all I seemed to have were meagre looking, 'dog-eared' notes (see appendix 3.2.3).

When researching Capoeira - a Brazilian form of dance and martial art (Delamont, 2006, 2007, 2008) - Delamont chose to observe the sessions rather than take part in them, for (as she writes) "if I did Capoeira myself, I would not be able to write any notes in the classes, because I would be upside down, dripping with sweat, and struggling to walk..." (2008, p. 47). As a participant observer, I often found myself in a similar situation to the one Delamont chose to avoid and contemporaneous note making was rendered impractical for me by the nature of the activities in which I was participating, where I needed both hands free most of the time. The only time I was actually upside down was having fallen off a surfboard, but I was often dripping

sweat and struggling to walk, clamber, paddle or swim. Note making was most difficult if not impossible. Additionally, the activities combined with often wet conditions made it impractical to use a voice recorder.

Returning to Walford's (2009) analysis of four ethnographers' approaches to field note making, it transpires that Connolly did not make contemporaneous notes when in school staffrooms, because of participant sensitivity. Although he did try to capture critical incidents by taking "toilet breaks" when he would "just sit down, lock the door and just actually write it ..." (Walford, 2009, p124), I could not even do this when in the water, or on a moorland walk. I tried to write down notes in hastily grabbed breaks between activities and at night in my tent or dormitory, but the volume and detail of my field notes were sparse. One obvious solution would have been to retire fairly early at night and write notes. The problem was that in doing so I would miss opportunities to observe as activities carried on to 10.00pm, and then the teachers and other adults would sit and talk, a rich data generating opportunity.

I was forced to critically consider the use of my memory. Delamont writes that her field notes scribbled *in situ* are "only an aide memoir" for what comes next, the writing up of these notes into fuller, more detailed notes (2008, p. 47). This statement, that few ethnographers would find fault with, is worthy of some detailed theorisation. Delamont seems to be indicating here that first of all the memory records data, then the notes are used as a way to 'unlock' the memory. Memory, then, may be considered the prime receptacle for ethnographic data.

The notes which I developed from my hastily scribbled and sparse field notes are much fuller and more detailed. These were typed in the days and weeks following the visit. As I am a part-time student, sometimes I would have lectures and/or meetings in the week(s) following a residential. Therefore on occasions it was a number of weeks, occasionally longer than a month, before I could write. On reflection, the process of generating data from observation to transcribed note form, was as follows:-

- Participant observation is engaged with (events memorised).
- Some hasty notes were made in the field, perhaps at the end of the day, immediately drawing on memory.
- Days or weeks later, these hasty field notes were typed up, and at this stage detail was added from memory.
- Analysis was beginning, and I was engaging in the iterative process advocated by many (e.g. Delamont, 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

Perhaps there has been an assumption that human memories are fallible and not to be relied upon. There are a number of reasons for rejecting this view, and some examples to illustrate this will be useful.

First, there have been occasions in which researchers have used memory rather than notes. Glaser and Strauss relate the story of taxi driver Fred Davis' (1959) research which was written from immersion as a taxi driver (impossible to write whilst driving) and with virtually no field notes. Glaser and Strauss argue that Davis' experiences and reflections upon them are no less valid than field notes as data (1967, p. 252).

Second, memory is also drawn upon when interviewing participants in research projects. The questions and prompts I used, the photographs we looked at, the extracts from the narratives I shared with my participants, all served to 'un-lock' memories. When the participants were talking to me, they were making use of their memories of the time at Wild Country Hall.

Finally, a number of respected historical accounts have been based on the memories of participants. For example, Lyn Macdonald's accounts of the First World War draw heavily on eyewitness memoirs (e.g. MacDonald, 1998); and interviews with Second World War veterans carried out in the 1980s, reliant on long term memory, were used by Ambrose (1992) to write his internationally acclaimed account of the war through the eyes of one company of US paratroopers.

In conclusion, I suggest the use of the memory in ethnographic research is valid and a legitimate research tool. It may be necessary for participant researchers (e.g. taxi drivers, rock climbers or surfers) when the nature of the activity prevents note making or electronic recording of data. This recourse to memory is particularly important, I suggest, in ethnographies that are undertaken in logistically difficult conditions for the researcher and where other methods (such as contemporaneous note making or electronic recording) are difficult or not feasible. These conditions may include expeditions (e.g. Allison, 2000; Beames, 2005; Rea, 2004, 2007b) as well as ethnographies of outdoor adventure and education centres such as mine. I am not suggesting that it is impossible to make contemporaneous notes in such settings. Only that it may be more difficult. Stan comments that it was "quite hard"

keeping up with the child participants in her research, because "...they were running around all the time. It was not easy to take notes, while trying to catch up with them", (2008, p.150). Stan was, largely, a non-participant observer in her research, whereas my role was less distinctly defined, and the nature of the activities I was observing, such as gorge walking and surfing, were qualitatively different to hers; in many respects I was a participant observer. I suggest that, without the acceptance of a degree of memorised data, ethnographic research in such conditions and contexts might be unachievable.

4.3 Methods: how the work was done.

Having discussed the philosophical, epistemological and practical reasons for adopting an inductive, iterative and qualitative ethnographic research approach, I now move on to discuss the research methods I chose for conducting this inquiry. In this part of the chapter I also discuss the ethical issues that arose during the research. The areas I now turn to can be considered in three parts:-

- First there is consideration of research ethics and gaining entry to the field.
- Next is the generation of data: searching archives of written data, undertaking participant observation, and conducting interviews with individuals and groups, including a discussion of the particular issues in conducting interviews with children.
- Finally, there is the analysis and representation of the data where I explain the analytical methods I employed.

4.3.1 Research ethics.

Many aspects of my research with children were, to a large extent, controlled by university research ethics committees, first at Oxford Brookes and later at the

University of Plymouth. Equally important, however, are my own ethical values in respect of research and I explain what I did to resolve the ethical issues that arose during the research.

Ethical values.

Alongside the ethics committees stand the personal ethical values of researchers. Beauchamp and Childress (2001) suggest that the three ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence and justice should underpin all research ethics. I am in agreement with Greig *et al* (2007) that these same principles have relevance to all aspects of our lives, personal and professional, as moral human beings. That social researchers generally do behave in a morally acceptable way as *moral human beings*, is evidenced by the fact that "there is very little external, lay concern about the ethical behaviour of social scientists in Britain" (Penn and Soothill, 2007, p 4). I will now explore Beauchamp and Childress' (2001) principles and show how they relate to my personal ethical values and how each has been fore-grounded in the research.

Autonomy.

I was able to exercise a degree of personal autonomy in deciding what research questions to explore and what methodological approaches to employ. In addition to this I had a large degree of agency in the selection of research site(s) in which to conduct the research. In these respects my research was perhaps privileged because I was neither commissioned to undertake the research nor pressurised to complete it in a short period of time.

Autonomy for participants means making informed decisions about whether or not to take part in the research, and acting with agency in deciding what to say when interviewed or invited to take place in a focus discussion group. Beauchamp and Childress (2001) have suggested that limitations such as inadequate understanding may prevent meaningful choices being exercised. I tried to ensure that all participants were given meaningful explanations about the nature and purpose of the research, including possible publication, and their rights. This meant talking at some length to staff at the residential centre, teachers, parents and children.

Beneficence.

This principle requires that we do no harm, and that we make informed judgments about the relative weights of costs, risks and benefits (summarised in Greig, *et al.*, 2007, p.170). The cost/benefit weighting in terms of different groups of participants are best explained under headings relating to these groups, to which I have added a fourth heading: the environment.

Cost/benefit for staff at Wild Country Hall.

All the centre staff allowed me to observe their practices as outdoor leaders, generally having me around and thus subjecting themselves to the added stress of the 'total gaze' (Foucault, 1977; Jeffrey and Troman, 2004) when an ethnographic observer is around them. Furthermore, and without exception, they gave time to talk to me about what they were doing. The Head of the centre, was especially helpful in giving up a great deal of time to talk to me. The benefits for them were not tremendous. I think involvement in the process perhaps improved their collective status a little, at least in the eyes of Anyshire LA and its advisory team. It was made public within the LA outdoor education service that a researcher was taking an active

interest in the work of the Wild Country Hall centre, and in 2005 I was invited to present an overview of the research project to a gathering of staff from all of the Anyshire's outdoor centres.

I gained the impression during talks with him, that the Centre Head might have preferred an evaluative study of the impact the centre was having on the children. However, he seemed to understand and accept that my research methodology was of a different nature and was unlikely to produce evaluative outputs. On one occasion a member of the centre staff questioned me on which children I was focusing on. I explained to her that the research was attempting to describe and explain the learning potential of the Wild Country Hall experience holistically and that I was not going to target particular children, nor was I interested in specific groups of children. She seemed happy with this response, stating that she thought too much investigation of the less able and the disengaged were in danger of distorting studies of outdoor centres.

Later, I became aware that aspects of my work and findings, for example, my critique of the pedagogy of the centre (see Chapter 5), may be uncomfortable to the centre staff and might, if not carefully and diplomatically introduced, harm their reputation. In view of this I decided to produce an executive summary for the centre and Anyshire LA in which I could report my findings in a sensitive and ethically sound way. This remains work to be done.

Cost/benefit for teachers and other adults in the participant schools.

The teachers and other visiting adults possibly gained the least benefits from participation in my study; neither were there great costs to them. When at the centre my teaching qualification, my experience in the outdoors and my First Aid qualification, were at times genuinely useful, and I provided an extra pair of hands. For example, as each sub-group needs to have a qualified teacher present and classroom assistants, parent helpers and some centre staff do not hold qualified teacher status, there were occasions when my presence aided the composition and size of sub-groups. I visited each participating school and spoke to teachers and parents, but only spent follow up time at two schools; Small Primary School and Suburbia Road Primary School. These schools may have found it at times useful to be able to say that a professional researcher was interested in their schools.

Cost/benefit for the children.

The children allowed me to accompany them on all the outdoor adventure activities, willingly talked to me during and after these, and let me read and use some of their writing in this study. Those who were pupils at Small Primary School gave up lesson time to take part in group interviews. The benefits they received for doing this were few: they had an adult who was willing to give time to listen to them and take their opinions seriously, and, I think, many of them enjoyed doing the group interviews. They found them fun, an important aspect of doing research with children (Greig, *et al.*, 2007).

Cost benefit analysis in terms of the environment and sustainability.

As a moral human being I wish to do what I can to protect the environment and to make what contributions I can to sustainability. I am concerned about my carbon footprint. I considered using public transport to visit the centre and Small Primary

School in order to do the follow up interviews. Unfortunately this was not viable, and so I used a car to make the journeys. However, being resident at the centre and reducing the number of journeys to the school by staying over in the area or by combining the journey with other purposes, helped to reduce the number of journeys I made, reducing my carbon footprint and making the project more sustainable.

I see sustainability as a broader concept than environmental issues. In the context of this research sustainability is about contributing to, rather than taking from; about building capacity, mine and others'. Research that 'uses' others in an almost parasitic fashion because it does not address the power relationship of researcher and subject has been strongly critiqued by those who take a feminist perspective (e.g. Oakley, 1986) and by Scheurich (1997) who focuses his critique on what he terms 'imperialist' research. Central to such capacity building is how I view the participants (especially children) in this research project. To quote Greig *et al* is the research " 'on', 'about' 'collaboratively' (or) 'with' children"? (2007, p. 158). I see my research as being *with* children [and the adult participants] and as such I see it as sustainable research because of the relationships and capacity it builds.

Justice.

According to Beauchamp and Childress (2001, p. 226) justice is about fair, equitable and appropriate treatment. Justice is a problematic concept when viewed in anything other than realist terms. What is fair and equitable is determined by the dominant discursive practices at play in particular social contexts. When I argue that a sense of social justice underpinned my actions, I must qualify this by pointing out that these are the constructions of social justice of a white, middle class Englishman with

twenty years experience as a school teacher who now works in higher education. They may only be meaningful in certain social contexts.

Ethical issues which demand just treatment are fore-grounded when research is to be written and submitted for publication. Penn and Soothill (2007) point out that there are circumstances where the results of research may well annoy respondents and I occasionally felt that what I was saying might be difficult for some participants to identify with. An example of this is my critique of pedagogy at the centre where I problematise the over-formalisation of learning (see Chapter 5). My critique, however, is not of the staff at the centre for adopting schooling practices. Rather my criticisms are of the education system that positions them into doing so. Throughout the production of this thesis, in publications based on the work (e.g. Rea, 2008a, 2008b) and, I hope, in future publications, my writing is underpinned by my desire to promote social justice and appropriate practice by raising what I consider to be important issues. However, both my conceptualisation of what may be 'just' in this situation, and what I consider to be important issues in the findings, are subjective and I recognise the danger that they might cause difficulties for others.

Gaining informed consent.

I decided to obtain written consent from the head of the Wild Country Hall centre and from the head teachers of each of the four schools that were to participate in this research project. Examples of the letters I used are given in Appendix 2. I considered it advantageous to have these permissions in writing, yet I have never been asked to produce them.

Gaining informed consent from parents was much more complex and problematic. The first school I visited was Small Primary School and the head offered to give out the information letters with a written consent form attached (appendix 2). The issue that manifested itself was what to do when I did not get back written consent forms from all of the parents. The head teacher and I discussed this. Our considered view was that this did not necessarily constitute parents refusing consent; it may have been simply the sort of omission busy people make. The University of Plymouth, Faculty of Education's ethics guidance at the time indicated clearly that consent is needed from either those acting in *loco parentis* or the children themselves if they are deemed to be of sufficient understanding - in other words, not from both. In this case I had the consent of many parents, the head of Small School, and the head of Wild Country Hall (either or both of whom could be considered to be in *loco parentis*). I decided to proceed with the research on this occasion by accompanying the school visit.

This was followed by my experience at Hilly Edge Primary School, where I spoke to the parents at a parents evening and gave out the information letters and written consent forms. One parent refused to give consent, causing a major ethical dilemma which is considered below under unexpected ethical issues.

At this point, I decided that gaining written consent from all parents was not a viable way of continuing. In my ongoing discussions about consent with the head of Small Primary School, he suggested placing a statement about my research on the bottom of his letters to parents, inviting them to opt out of the research on behalf of their child if they felt strongly that they did not wish them to take part. Whilst I do not think

this conformed perfectly to the requirements of the Research Ethics Committee I accepted it as a pragmatic way forward.

Regardless of the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee's guidance that only parents or children need to give consent, I decided to gain the informed assent (Greig, *et al.*, 2007; WHO, 2004) of all the children who would become involved in the research regardless of whether their parents had given consent. I did this by talking to them in the school, by inviting questions and answering these and by consistently reminding them, in large and small groups, that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the research without this affecting their continued participation in the activities at the centre.

Simply telling somebody they have the right to be involved or not, and have the right to withdraw if they so desire, does not actually empower them to exercise these rights. I did not have a single child who indicated they wished to withdraw. Surely, this was not because all of the children are committed to the principles of research informed public practice. It may have been that the power relationships between a middle aged, male researcher and young children rendered them powerless. Or it may have been because they were enjoying themselves.

Ensuring anonymity.

Anonymity and confidentiality are often confused (e.g. Greig, *et al* , 2007, p 179).

Examples of this occur in the University of Plymouth, Faculty of Education's guidance on completing an ethics protocol which says:-

"researchers are required to ensure confidentiality of the participant's identity *and data* throughout the conduct and reporting of the research,"

(section 6, my italics)

If we accept Stenhouse's definition of research as "systematic enquiry made public" (Skilbeck, 1988) then it is difficult to see how data can be kept confidential, if that means 'in confidence' A qualitative researcher who wishes to use verbatim quotations from participants can never promise to hold participant views in confidence It is anonymity that makes it possible to make public participant views without revealing their provenance.

To maintain the anonymity of the centre, the LA and the schools I decided to use pseudonyms. However, this is an imperfect attempt at protecting the anonymity of the centre because it may be possible for readers to make informed speculations as to the centre and schools Outdoor education is a relatively minor area of education There is a small research community involved in investigating it, writing in three main specialist journals. Within this research community it is known where I have been researching; that is to say, people in the field are aware of the centre that is the site of my research. With that knowledge it is possible to obtain the names of those schools that use the centre and make informed guesses about the three schools that feature in my research, though this would be more difficult. This is not an uncommon phenomenon, for example Greig *et al* (2007) give an example of how their local knowledge and involvement has enabled them to identify participants It might be

argued that in a technological age guarantees of complete anonymity are impossible. For example, at the time I was researching it was policy in the University of Plymouth, Faculty of Education that a copy of all successful ethics protocols were stored electronically in a folder on the Faculty of Education website. All staff and students had access to these examples to inform their own research, any staff or students could find my ethics protocol which names the centre, LA and schools.

Legal considerations and the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

Ethical considerations merged with legal ones once I decided that my research demanded that I was resident at the centre with groups of children. Following the Soham murders of August 2002 and the subsequent charges brought against Huntley and Carr the government had to be seen to be taking action; it insisted that CRB checks must be undertaken on all those working or volunteering in children's establishments before their work commenced. The head of the Wild Country Hall demanded that a check was conducted by the CRB to see whether I had convictions for child abuse or any other relevant crime.

The head of Small School was helpful in providing application forms and sponsoring my application for the check. He suggested that I term myself a volunteer for the purposes of the CRB check as this would result in the check being done without charge. This raises other ethical and methodological issues, however. Was it ethically sound to avoid this charge by claiming to be a volunteer? To what extent do staff at the centre, staff at the school and pupils regard me as anything other than a researcher? When I visited the centre in April 2004 with Small School there were two teachers and two other adult helpers with the school party. As I stayed with the party in the centre, sleeping in a small dormitory there, ate with them at all meal times and

accompanied them throughout their daily and evening activities, did they see me as a volunteer helper or a participant observer? How might their perceptions of me affect our relationship?

Ross and Scourfield (2007) suggest that when children or vulnerable adults are involved in research it is useful to state that CRB checks have been undertaken. Once my CRB check had been carried out I was able to state this when seeking access, but nobody has ever asked me to show my CRB disclosure. Nor have I seen it myself to check its accuracy as my copy of the disclosure report was lost either by the CRB or the Post Office/Royal Mail. The CRB refused to issue a replacement, stating that this was not their policy, as the disclosure was valid 'only on the day it was issued', a policy that seems to question the validity of this vetting process.

Un-predicted ethical issues.

I have not used the term 'emergent' ethical issues (e.g. Leeson, 2007) here as I see this as another realist term which suggests such issues were there all along, submerged and waiting to reveal themselves. Rather, I see ethical issues as socially constructed as are the means of dealing with them appropriately. The following three issues were important in the research and how I dealt with them is detailed below.

Who has the final say: parents or their children?

My experience at Hilly Edge Primary School raised an important issue early on in the research process, whilst attempting to obtain informed consent. When I spoke to the parents at a parents' evening and gave out the information letters and written consent forms, one parent refused to give consent, stating that she did not want her

child to take part in the research. This caused a major ethical dilemma which I was unprepared for. It raised the question of whether the wishes of the parent or the child are ultimately sovereign? To exclude the child from observation *in situ* would have been impossible without singling out the child concerned. Though I felt in the context of what was being proposed the views of the child should be considered over those of the parent, I had no desire to be the subject of a legal dispute, or even to encounter a conflagration with an angry parent. As reported above, I had gained consent from those in *loco parentis* and I decided to continue with the research, but not to make the child in question the particular focus of any observation. I did not use Hilly Edge school for follow up group interviews. Though in practice I was unable to identify the child concerned, especially when the children were dressed in Wild Country Hall waterproof clothing, or in wet suits, I remain slightly uneasy as to whether this was an ethically sound stance to take.

What to do, and how to behave ethically, when observing unethical behaviour in the field?

Another example of an unforeseen ethical issue occurred with Suburbia Road Primary School and it raises the question of what is the role of the researcher if an unethical action is observed? At the end of the third day all of the pupils from Suburbia Road wrote postcards home, and they were left on a table. As I sat with the school staff one of the classroom assistants began reading through the postcards. She read out some of the comments. One child wrote a postcard [see figure 5] to his family, stating that:-

"The door does not get locked at night. A mad-man could get in and murder us."

This, and other postcards, was discussed between the adults and there was some laughter, for example at children's misspellings. I remain uneasy about the ethical situation here. I had gained informed consent and assent to look at pupils' writing on the scribble sheets and their writing done at school. I had not, however, sought or gained consent to look at such private writing. On reflection, the classroom assistant might agree it was wrong of her to read through the postcards, but a postcard, by nature of its design, is not a securely private document and all of them had been left in a public place. The whole experience had generated data raising important issues about perceptions of safety, and surrounding the power relationships on a residential visit; problematic issues about permitting an interface between children and their parents. I decided to use these data.

Safeguarding the researcher.

Then there were risks and safety issues for me; particularly with so much contact with groups of children. Fincham, Bloor and Sampson (2007) suggest that higher education institutions seem particularly ignorant of the implications of risks for their employees (who are researching) and themselves, especially when the risk might be to emotional well-being. I do not recall receiving guidance from any of the three institutes of higher education that have had a stake in this research (Buckingham Chilterns University College, Oxford Brookes University, the University of Plymouth) on how to protect myself from harm or how to promote my own well-being whilst researching. In particular I became aware that I might be putting myself at risk of false allegation if I allowed myself be alone with a child. On my application for ethical clearance at Plymouth (see appendix 1 A) I wrote,

I do not go into children's dormitories. I do not allow myself to be alone with any of the children,

and throughout the research I tried to ensure that I was never left alone with a child, especially inside a room. In fact, such situations rarely arose because all of the activities were in groups and in public spaces. There were a few occasions when I would be sitting alone in a room; for example, the lounge at the centre, writing field notes, when a child would wander in. In these cases, if the child decided to stay for more than a minute or two, I elected to leave.

There was one occasion when events positioned me into breaking this rule, and this is an example of unforeseen ethical problems and dilemmas that the ethics research committee guidance did not prepare me for. Early one morning, before the centre staff had arrived, a boy trapped his finger in a door. The finger was bleeding, the boy was yelling, and a classroom assistant tried to calm him. As there was nobody else there with first aid certificate I volunteered to dress the wound and this offer was accepted by both the teacher in charge and the boy. The classroom assistant found a first aid box and we moved to a spare bedroom, equipped with a sink. She then proceeded to leave me alone with the child to do the dressing before I could object. This produced an ethical dilemma. I believed that good practice in safeguarding indicated that I should not remain in this situation; but the boy was agitated and the wound needed a dressing. What was the ethically correct course of action to take?

I made the dressing.

4.3.2 Finding a site and negotiating entry.

Whereas Walford suggests that “ site selection should be based upon the particular theoretical or practical issues that the researcher seeks to investigate .” (2008b, p17), I seem to have ‘stumbled’ upon Wild Country Hall. I located and gained access to the centre in a partly serendipitous way. The process was both unexpected and opportune, it happened as follows -

In 2003 I was teaching on a MA Programme at Oxford Brookes University at a time when the Programme had strong relationships with, and attracted teachers from, seven midlands counties and a London authority. One of my part-time masters students was the Head Teacher of Small School, Anyshire. By this time I had decided that I wanted to conduct research in the field of outdoor learning for a PhD, but had not made decisions regarding the research design or site. Through informal conversation, we discovered that we had a number of mutual interests concerning the outdoors and eventually my research ideas became a topic of conversation. At this point the Head Teacher suggested that I accompany his school on their forthcoming visit to Wild Country Hall centre, scheduled for the following spring.

Why did I not follow the systematic process of selecting a site suggested by Walford (2008b)? First, I feel that to some extent Walford (2008b) may be writing about a somewhat ideal research situation, indeed he uses the term ‘ideal’ himself (cited below) when writing about gaining access. In the real world context that my research was conducted in, very little was ideal. Indeed, I found myself continually making compromises between what I may have wanted to do in an ideal situation, and what I was actually able to do. The Wild Country Hall site proved to be a suitable context for

the research I did there and I am happy with the process of selection and the ensuing research.

Second, Walford's suggested approach seems to be, at least to some extent, an essentialisation of the ethnographic research process, as he seems to be suggesting there is only one way of undertaking it. For example, he writes that "once an ideal site has been selected, researchers need to develop a way of obtaining access to that site..." (Walford, 2008b, p21) and this seems rather prescriptive language. I contest this, suggesting there are many variations to educational ethnography that remain within the spirit and nature of the ethnographic form, which I claim my research to be. In addition, Walford has recognised variation in ethnographic research elsewhere (e.g. Walford, 2008a).

Third, Walford's suggestion that research sites need to be selected in accordance with particular theoretical issues that the researcher seeks to investigate strongly implies a deductive approach to the theorisation of the research which, as I have explained at length earlier in this chapter, is the antithesis of the inductive approach I adopted in this project. As the experiences and processes to be researched were initially unknown to me, it was difficult (if not impossible) to know what theoretical issues to apply to the research, so how might I have used these in a selection process at the outset? In the final analysis, the serendipitous and fortunate way in which I 'found' Wild Country Hall enabled what I consider to be a robust and worthwhile research project.

Following discussions with my supervisors I pursued my serendipitous invitation and visited the centre in January 2004 to meet the Head. All the visits are detailed in table 2

Date of visit	Length of visit	Purpose	School (if relevant)
January 2004	2 hours	Negotiate access	N/A
February 2004	1 day	Search archives	N/A
April 2004	5 days	Pilot study	Small School
November 2004	5 days	Observation	Hilly Edge School
February 2005	5 days	Observation	Suburbia Row School
April 2005	5 days	Observation	Small School
April 2006	5 days	Observation	Small School
April 2007	5 days	Observation	Small School
8 visits	31 days		

Table 2 Visits made to Wild Country Hall.

I recognised that this was a key meeting, as the head of the centre's consent to the research was all important and he had the right of veto over the centre's participation in the project. Though my recommendation from the Head Teacher of Small School was important, this meeting would decide whether access would be granted or not

Walford has argued that researchers need to be ready to 'sell' their research to gatekeepers, being persuasive in pointing out how they might benefit from the research (2008b, p. 21) and doing much preparation, or groundwork prior to the first meeting.

My groundwork began by thinking about what I would wear. It is worthy of remark that when I first met the Head of Small School he was wearing the dark suit, collar and tie of the Head Teacher and I the denim jeans and leather jacket of the university lecturer. Neither of us dressed like this at Wild Country Hall. Outdoor centres, or more precisely, those who work in them, tend to have a 'uniform' dress code and fitting into this would be important to the first impression the centre head and his staff who I would need to work alongside, gained of me. Delamont (2002) has written of the need for appropriate dress, and she writes eloquently of how she selected a particular dress code when meeting with a Head Teacher to discuss access to her school, and a totally different dress code when meeting the adolescent girls she was interviewing there. Similarly, Frank (2002) needed to (un)dress in an appropriate way to gain the trust of the working girls and their male clients in her ethnography of strip clubs. I decided on tee shirt and fleece jacket, cotton trousers, the sort with many zippered pockets, and trainers; all obviously well worn to signal my active participation in outdoor activities.

I also rehearsed answers to what I thought the questions might focus upon. Particularly I thought the head of centre would want to seek reassurances about how long I would be around, whether I might be 'in the way', and might quiz me as to how the centre might benefit from my findings

The interview went well. On the basis of it we agreed that -

- I would make a preliminary visit [see table 2] to read through the centre's archives; policy documents, session plans.
- I would visit the following April with Small School. This would be a pilot visit where I could test observational methods and generally get to know the centre and staff
- The centre would find contacts in other schools that were scheduled to visit the centre the following academic year, and I would approach these schools to try to enlist more participants into the project.
- I would keep the centre informed of the research as it progressed and provide the centre with a summary of findings at the end of the research process.

4.3.3 Searching archives of written data

Wild Country Hall, like other outdoor education centres, stores much written material. This includes what those who work there write about the centre and its programmes (programmes of study and lesson plans) what Anyshire LA has written about it, and some of what the children and teachers have written about it. Searching these archives seemed an appropriate and convenient starting point for my investigation. I undertook the archive search of the centre's documentation during a visit to the centre in February 2004. Additional material was found on the centre's internet site and on the LA's website. The centre staff were helpful in providing the materials I needed, though I was unable to take anything away. There was no really suitable space in which to carry out the search, and make notes. To an extent, therefore, I was forced into using the unsuitable small staffroom, making the notes on my lap with a number of interruptions. Whilst I do not feel this was detrimental to the

research, I try to recognise that the influence on the meanings I made from this process of the room, my location therein and those interruptions. For example, I might have subconsciously formed an opinion that the centre was informal or amateurish because there was no library or quiet study space.

Searching archives, analysing their contents and writing narratives and explanations based upon archive data is essentially the work of the historian. The historian's craft can be seen as either a realist or constructionist activity. From a realist perspective the historian is a value free social scientist using skills and experience to search and analyse the archives in order to provide an account that is as close to the truth as possible. From a constructionist perspective, the interplay between the discourses present in the archive texts and those discursive practices shaping the thoughts of individual historians provide the widely differing interpretations of events that constitute the rich tapestry of historiography. Thus there are Whig, Marxist and post-modernist accounts of the same historical events that provide readers with widely different constructions of the past.

When searching and analysing the centre's archives, I recognise that I was not a value free, impartial researcher. Throughout the process I was aware of the discursive conflicts at play. For example, the discourses of schools effectiveness and performativity (e.g. Ball, 2003, 2004a; Davies and Bansel, 2007) reflected in the archived texts conflicted with my subjective preference for alternatives based on Wrigley's (2003, 2007) schools of hope discourse. The centres adherence to the essentialist 'best practice' of explaining learning objectives to children (e.g. Hayes, 2007) perhaps jarred with my preference for flexible, situated and contextual

approaches to learning, for example those articulated by Shepherd (2007). The close attention paid to health and safety issues in the literature, developed as a reaction to the discourse of risk aversion and fear outlined by Furedi (1997) and also observed by Stan (Humberstone and Stan, 2009a, 2009b) clash with discourses that value the benefits of measured risk taking (e.g. Mortlock, 1984, 2002)

A major consideration in searching archived documentation and using it as data is understanding the relationship between authorship and audience. All of these texts are developed from the discourses they are part of. For example, policy documents are embedded within, and constructed from, discourse of power. There is always a power relationship between author, audiences and purpose. Likewise, letters to parents, websites, reports, evaluations. Letters of thanks received by the centre from children are formed from the discursive practices of politeness and diplomacy and may affect what and how children write. Many children are required to write thank-you letters as part of the English /literacy curriculum, which may point them towards a focus on the form rather than the meaning of the letter.

Largely because of the ethical issues surrounding consent and the practical difficulties in using electronic equipment in the field, I decided not to take a camera into Wild Country Hall. Photographs, however, I considered useful in two ways.-

- They would be useful as prompts to children in the follow-up group interviews
- They would enhance the text in my thesis, by providing a visual dimension for readers [I include 11 photographs in this thesis]

I found photographs on the Anyshire website (Anyshire, 2009) and decided that as these were in the public domain, there no ethical issues surrounding my use of them. However, to preserve the anonymity of both the centre and the participants I used a software to blurr the faces on people and name of the centre in these photographs.

4.3.4 The pilot study: April 2004 the first visit with Small school.

This was the visit along with Small School suggested to me by the Head Teacher and subsequently agreed by the centre. My field notes contain records of my feelings of being placed under scrutiny from some of the centre staff, particularly the Deputy Head of the centre. This was the first time I met her and I felt that I was being 'tested out', especially on the coasteering; being 'put through my paces' by the Deputy Head, to satisfy her that I would not be an extra burden. I think this is perfectly legitimate of her in the context of the outdoor activities that are part of the centre's work. An inexperienced or vulnerable adult around may have caused additional concerns or problems for the staff.

I used this visit to gain familiarity of the centre and its work. This was the first time I saw in action many of the sessions I read about earlier. For example, I noted:-

The first outdoor session is the low ropes course. It is difficult to be methodical about observing this. I spend some time with a small group. There is much dashing about, in and out, over and under, much enjoyment, it seems. One or two falls, nothing serious,

(Field notes April, 2004).

Prevalent in some literature are urges to observers to use observation schedules (e.g. Bell, 1993; Robson, 2002) and in this pilot study I was able to think in context about the use of these in data generation. For example, in my field notes I wrote an aide memoir to myself that:-

I could develop the observation schedule outlined by Bell. But will this capture all aspects of the group activity? I can use this in my next visit so long as the activities are suitable,

(Field notes April, 2004)

Observation schedules tend to be based on a deductive research approach, as the themes to be noted come first. I have a number of reservations about using observation schedules:-

- They tend to preset the parameters and agenda for the observation and so might increase the likelihood of my missing much useful and important data
- They may lead to a quasi-quantitative approach where the researcher counts the incidence of various presupposed phenomena.
- Their use would necessitate me using a clipboard, or notebook, which was not always possible.

My field notes of this first visit also suggest that I was struggling to develop my research design at this stage. For example, I wrote:-

What is group observation going to tell me? Will it help me answer my overarching research question? If I can't measure in a positivistic way, and I can't use participant observation (at least not of the children's night time experiences) and non-participant/ structured observation won't tell me what I want to know. how can I find out?

(Field notes April, 2004)

The answer to this last question was to use follow-up small group interviews to allow the children to divulge to me whatever they chose of those late night dormitory experiences.

4.3.5 The main ethnographic field work.

Subsequent to that first visit, I made five further visits to Wild Country Hall in order to undertake my ethnographic observations. All the visits are detailed in table 2.

The ethnographic work during my visits.

Each visit was for a period of five days, accompanying the school. I was able to take part in all of the activities, both in the centre and in the surrounding countryside. The activities I took part in included rock climbing, canoeing, surfing, coasteering, moorland walking and gorge walking.

Despite my concerns and reservations, on my visit in November 2004 I attempted to use the observation matrix developed by the Open University (Bell, 1993). This was not successful due to a number of practical problems. The observations were carried out in circumstances that all involved me in physical activity, and some of them took place on, in or close by the water. These factors made it difficult to use a clipboard and paper. I did not know the children well, I had met them just once before and as they were on the low ropes course there was a great deal of movement. To add to my difficulties it was a rainy afternoon and so the children were all wearing Wild Country Hall waterproof suits. They looked remarkably alike. I could not easily tell the boys from the girls, let alone pick out individuals. Using the matrix was problematic in the context of an outdoor setting with much participant movement and the added complication of them all looking alike. Thus I abandoned the matrix approach after the first day and decided in future to note freely my recollections of observations.

On many occasions I was walking with participants. For example, to and from other activities, or on a moorland walk or to and from the beach. These walks were good opportunities to talk to participants, and a method I had used previously (Rea, 2004, 2007b). 'Mobile methods' such as walking and talking are increasingly being adopted by researchers interested in place and identity (Anderson and Moles, 2008, Moles, 2010) as they are "rooted in the everyday, yet the walks open up avenues, offer enhanced opportunities for the exploration of memories and imagined futures," (Moles, 2010, p. 1). I found this to be the case as, whilst walking, I could ask children about what they had been doing the day before and how they thought the activities and experiences might sustain them in the future, as well as talking about the places we were walking through at the time. Walking and talking, especially in the wet and wind and over difficult terrain, presented problems for recording data, however, and I have discussed this above.

Most of my time during these observations was spent joining in and/or observing the many activities and the social and residential aspects of the Wild Country Hall experience, and much data was generated this way.

4.3.6 Interviews; individual and group.

Kvale (1996) suggests that when we want to know how people understand their world and their life, we should talk to them. Talking to participants was the most appropriate way of finding out what knowledge and meanings they had constructed from the Wild Country Hall experience, especially in respect to my research questions about children's learning and the extent to which neo-Liberal agenda had affected the discursive practices at Wild Country Hall. I chose to conduct a number of interviews with some participants, 22 children and three adults. All of these people

had a connection with Small School, Anyshire. Table 3 lists the interviews and explains their context.

I decided not to conduct formal interviews with members of the centre staff because, they had no further contact with the children once they had left the centre, and so they had no first-hand knowledge of the effects of the experience on the children. However, conversations with centre staff occurred at times during my observations and sometimes this was about the centre and its work. This early decision had implications. It meant that I was later unable to ask centre based staff for their comments on the pedagogy on Wild Country Hall. I discuss this in Chapter 6 as one of the weaknesses of my research.

Interviews are suitable for researching small numbers of relatively easily accessible participants which was the case in my research project. It is also a useful method where research aims require insight and understanding, where depth of meaning is central, with only some approximation to typicality and where most of the questions are open, requiring extended responses, perhaps with prompts and probes (Gillham, 2000, p. 11).

Table 3 Individual and group interviews.

Who	When	Where	Why
One group of children from the school (n=4) see appendix 3 2.2	July 2005	Quiet classroom	To investigate their experiences at the centre
Seven groups of children from the school (n=18) see an extract from this interview in appendix 3 2 2	May 2006	Summer House	To investigate their experiences at the centre
A Parent of three children at the school, two of whom had been to Wild Country Hall	July 2005	Classroom after school	To investigate his views about how children may have been affected by the experience
A classroom assistant at the school who was also a parent	July 2005	Classroom after school	To investigate her views about how children may have been affected by the experience
The Head Teacher of Small School	July 2008, see appendix 3 2 1	School staffroom	To investigate his views about how children may have been affected by the experience
	May 2010	His home	To check on my interpretation of his statements, and seek assurances about the verisimilitude of my narrative

Gillham (2000) describes an interview as a conversation where one person (the interviewer) is seeking responses for a particular purpose from the other person. We may call them other things (discussion, chat) but essentially the interview is formal, structured and puts the interviewer in control over the interviewee (Gillham, 2000). This view is contested. For example, Lawthom presents her interviews with Colleen Stamford as relaxed, informal occasions, which Stamford herself calls "chats" (2004, p. 73). Lawthom suggests that Colleen Stamford had as much control over these interviews as did she, as researcher; and Stamford's corroboration of this evokes a view of genuinely participative research. Lawthom and Stamford's view, however, may be seen as somewhat naïve when considered from a Foucauldian perspective, where all relationships contain a power dimension.

Gillham maintains there is less difference between the purpose of an interview than there is in the degree to which it is structured and the degree to which the interviewee is allowed to lead the discussion. Gillham has tabulated degree of structure in what he calls "the verbal data dimension" (2000, p. 6) on a seven point continuum ranging from unstructured to structured. At the unstructured end of this continuum are listening to other people's conversations and using natural conversation to ask research questions, both of which approaches I have utilised. At the structured end of the continuum are structured and semi-structured questionnaires. In the middle, are open-ended and semi-structured interviews, and it is this approach that I have taken.

Interviewing the adults.

I interviewed the Head Teacher of Small School in July 2008 (appendix 3.2.1) and again in May 2010. The first interview was conducted in the staffroom of his school in

Anyshire. Prior to the second interview, which took place at his home and lasted about an hour, I sent the Head Teacher draft copies of the introduction and Chapter 5.1 of my thesis. I based the conversation on these papers.

This Head Teacher has been taking groups of children to Wild Country Hall for 18 years and so was an expert participant with many stories about the centre and the children who had been there. It should be understood that during my 30 days of field observations [see table 2] I also had many informal conversations with him. A good example of work generated from these conversations is provided in my account of the Wild Country Hall visit to the lambing shed of a local farm (Chapter 5.1). That account is based on three data sets:-

- My observations of the visit
- Informal conversations with the head teacher
- Comments made in the interviews carried out afterwards

I also wanted to interview some other involved adults to gain some understanding of their perceptions of the effect residential and outdoor education experience has on children. In July 2005 I visited Small School and interviewed two adults, a married couple, one of whom worked as a classroom assistant in Small School. I interviewed them twice, on consecutive days for about 90 minutes in total. I first met them at the centre in April 2004. The husband is aged 35 and works as an engineer. He uses five days of his annual leave each April to accompany the school visit to the centre. He is referred to as male parent in extracts from my data. The woman is aged 32 and she works at the school as a classroom assistant and is engaged in a part time

course of study to become a qualified teacher. She is referred to as female classroom assistant in extracts from the data.

I wanted to understand their views and opinions about the residential experience and how it affected children. They have three children, two of whom have taken part in the residential and I was interested to know how these parents perceived their children's participation, how it may have impacted upon them.

Interviewing the male parent and female classroom assistant seemed to be the most appropriate way of generating data from them. I had asked the Head Teacher of the school to arrange the interviews for me. There was some misunderstanding, however. I had intended interviewing each of them separately, on consecutive days following school. When I arrived for the interview with the female classroom assistant, her husband was there too. The male parent had taken time off work to come to the school to take part in the interview and for this reason I did not feel confident or happy about raising the issue of one-to-one interviews. I conducted a dyad interview.

Interviewing children

My ethnographic observation has not been able to illuminate all aspects of the residential experience. For example, ethical considerations dictated that I was not able to observe the children's behaviour in the (semi)privacy of their dormitories. Group interviews allow the possibility of gaining insight into important aspects of the residential experience. Individual interviews were avoided for methodological reasons discussed later in my critique of carrying out research with children. A questionnaire approach may also have generated usable data, but it did not fit well

into my chosen approach as questionnaires tend to be highly structured (Gillham, 2000) and depend on the researcher composing effective questions. My inductive approach to this research meant I had little idea of the questions I wanted to ask; only the broad outline

Therefore, to supplement and enrich the data generated through ethnographic observation I undertook follow-up visits to one of the schools, Small School, and spent time talking to some of the participants in small groups. I took along some photographs to prompt their memory, and some vignettes written by me from the ethnographic data. This process was useful because it also provided some form of participant checking on my preliminary analysis of the data, helping me to 'see if I had interpreted events in similar ways to the participants or if they saw things differently. Seeing things differently is an important part of the research process and is a means of reaching a better understanding. It alerted me to things I had missed that participants saw as important. It led me to the consideration of homesickness and dormitory culture, and allowed me to eventually develop the perspective of rites of passage when considering the discursive practices of the centre (see Chapters 3 and 5). It is important to point out that a deductive approach to the research, or even a structured interview schedule, might have led to me missing these aspects considered so important by the children.

I decided to use a largely unstructured approach to the group discussions, because I wanted to allow the participants a large degree of control of the agenda so that they would be more likely to talk about phenomena I may have missed. Through this process a degree of co-construction of the findings was possible.

I chose to use groups to generate data from children who had experienced the residential outdoor education centre. 'Focus groups' were invented in the work of Merton and Lazarsfeld in the 1930s. They were used to develop effective US propaganda during the Second World War (Morgan, 1998), largely in response to Merton's view that the group interviews Lazarsfeld was using, placed too much emphasis on the role of the interviewer and restricted the interviewee's responses (Merton, Fiske, and Kendall, 1990; Merton and Kendall, 1946; Morgan, 1998). Focus groups have been defined as group interviews, where "a moderator guides the interview while a small group discusses the topics that the interviewer raises," (Morgan, 1998, p. 1). Greenbaum identifies three types of focus group (full groups, mini groups and telephone groups) and suggests the number of participants involved can range from four to 10 (1998, p. 3). Much of the literature suggests that the focus group moderator needs to be trained (e.g. Greenbaum, 1998) though Morgan (1998) has contradicted this, pointing out that there may be a number of reasons why a non-trained moderator who can more easily be accepted by a group and make them feel at ease may be preferable. Apart from my reading about focus groups I attended no training. In any case, the literature agrees that these moderators are not interviewers and do not ask questions, but use pre-prepared outlines or guides (Greenbaum, 1998; Morgan, 1998). My role was as an interviewer. There is general agreement in the literature that focus groups work best when the group is made up of homogenous participants.

Because the literature I have considered on focus groups (Greenbaum, 1998; Merton, *et al.*, 1990; Merton and Kendall, 1946; Morgan, 1998) is so precise and

definite in defining them, I decided not to describe my work with the children as 'focus groups'. Instead, I call them group interviews. Nevertheless, the literature describing focus groups has proved useful to my study. For example, Morgan (1998) sees advantages of interviewing groups or promoting group discussions when the researcher is setting out to explore poorly understood topics or discover new insights as they are "one of the few forms of research where you can learn a great deal without really knowing what questions (to) ask", (Morgan, 1998, p. 12). Greenbaum (1998) has identified nine purposes for focus groups, and my purposes for using group interviews corresponds to the 'attitude studies' he identifies. This is because I am setting out, in part, to generate data that illuminates the children's attitudes to their experiences.

One-to-one interviews introduce an additional problem for researchers working with children. The ethical protocols of both the residential centre and the schools proscribe adults from being in a room alone with a child. This is to protect the child from abuse and to protect the adult from false allegations of abuse. Consequently, I would have had to conduct the interviews in a room with other people and other activity going on. This might have created distractions and background noise that may have made transcriptions of the tapes difficult. My investigation of the literature on focus groups allowed me to work with small groups of children in a quiet and relaxed space away from other activity and distractions. The literature suggests that while small groups avoid these problems, they bring additional advantages. When the researcher does not have a clear idea of what questions to ask, there are benefits of peer interaction where participants question each other, seek clarification and respond to suggestions made by others (Morgan, 1998). Greenbaum (1998)

calls this the dynamics of discussion that occurs amongst participants in groups. One of the drawbacks of group interviews may be the 'social loafing' identified by Asmus and James (2005), where some participants make comments that are mere 'spin off' from others. A possible alternative that might avoid loafing is the Nominal Group Technique (Van de Ven and Delbecq, 1957), which also has the advantages of including everyone and stopping the outspoken from dominating. However, I am in agreement with MacPhail (2001) that the high degree of structure and prescription involved in Nominal Group Technique tends to outweigh its advantages, especially for use with children

I visited Small School in the summers of 2005 and 2006. On each occasion this was six to eight weeks following the residential. I chose this period as much of the literature suggests it is an appropriate amount of time to allow in order to avoid any euphoria effect of an outdoor programme (e.g. Gibbs and Bunyan, 1997; Hattie, *et al.*, 1997). A euphoria effect is considered to be when the participant of an outdoor programme is in an emotionally heightened state immediately following an exciting outdoor programme (Hattie, *et al.*, 1997).

Gillham (2000) points out that setting up and travelling to and from the interview typically takes up more time than the discussion itself. On each occasion I was able to visit the school and stay for an extended period of time, rather than travelling to conduct one group interview at a time. This approach greatly reduced the amount of time spent on travel which I might otherwise have committed to the study, as in July 2005 I was based at the school for two whole days and conducted a group interview with four children (as well as two interviews with adults and gathering children's

writing) and in May 2006 I stayed for four days and conducted a further seven group interviews with 18 children. In total, this provided me with eight sets of group interview data featuring 22 children. Afterwards I transcribed the taped discussions and an extract from these transcripts is included as appendix 3.2.2.

Children who had been on the residential were selected at random to participate in the group interviews. I found the children overwhelmingly keen and enthusiastic to participate, which mirrors Scott's observations on the British Household Panel Study (2000, p. 105). The reasons for their enthusiasm to be involved may have been a response to their being treated as important participants in the research project, being taken seriously as people with something useful to contribute. Equally it may have been because they were missing some classroom activity which they may have considered less interesting, or a desire to please.

The groups were of homogenous participants necessary for successful group interviews (Greenbaum, 1998; Morgan, 1998). I worked with small groups of two to four children. This number accords to Greenbaum's (1998) mini groups, though he suggests a minimum group size of four. Greenbaum (1998) adopts a positivist stance throughout, maintaining a number of absolute values which he maintains are necessary for successful research using group interviews. Others (e.g. Morgan, 1998) are more adaptable in their outlook. I found that those data generated by groups of two or three children are as rich and useful as those generated by groups of 4.

The group discussions lasted about half an hour. Greenbaum (1998) fixes precise time boundaries for the interviews, 90 minutes to two hours. I found that most groups had said what they wanted to say after 30 minutes and some sooner. Perhaps this was because my groups were relatively small, or perhaps because the participants were younger than those in Greenbaum's experience.

4.3.7 A discussion and critique of undertaking research with children.

Mayall (2000) argues that generational differences between adults and children cannot be eliminated from the research interview context, but can be worked with (Christensen and James, 2000a). She suggests two broad approaches that may be adopted by adults researching children (Mayall, 2000, pp.120-121). The first - which comes from the psychological tradition - accepts the generational order, assumes the superiority of adult knowledge over children's knowledge, conducts research 'on' children, often through detached observation. The second approach - which originates in an anthropological tradition - acknowledges but seeks to suspend or question the generational order, acknowledges the importance of engaging with children's knowledge of the work they inhabit, and conducts research 'with' children, often through participant involvement with them.

I interviewed 22 children and three adults during this project [see table 3], which is evidence of both my belief in the value of listening to children in order to understand issues they are involved in, and my trust in the reliability of child respondents. This belief and trust is supported in the literature. For example, Scott points out that there is "...growing evidence to suggest that the best source of information about issues pertinent to children is the children themselves" (2000, p106) and she points to recent evidence that suggests children are more reliable as witnesses than may

have been previously thought Drawing on Spencer and Flinn (1990) Scott sets out four key points of advice for those doing interviews with children:-

- Give unambiguous and comprehensible instructions,
- Avoid leading questions
- Explicitly permit 'don't know' answers
- Interview on home ground if possible, (based on Scott, 2000, p106)

I will now explain how I followed this advice, including where and why I departed from it

Giving unambiguous and comprehensible instructions.

In that all I wanted the children to do was talk about their experiences at Wild Country Hall, this advice was very easy to incorporate into the interviews. I explained to the children that I was interested in their opinions and that they could talk about what they thought was important, but that I might ask specific questions as the discussion developed I also showed photographs to the children to prompt memory and focus the discussion, and I asked for their responses and shared parts of the narrative with them, again to focus their talk

Avoiding leading questions and permitting 'don't know' answers.

In carrying out the group interviews with the children I was conscious of the value of the feminist perspective discussed by Oakley (1986) and tried to create more of a reciprocal conversation of the kind Lawthorn (2004) describes, rather than a hierarchical, one way communication. I was also mindful of the advice not to ask leading questions. The following example from the transcripts illustrates the kind of 'conversation' that resulted:-

Tony (to MD) "What about you, were you about to say...?"
MD "Yeah."
FO "...and I wash my hair without asking"
MD "I wash even more, have a shower every day. I normally have it every two days but now I have it every one day."
Tony "Did your parents say anything?"
MD "Yeah they said I changed as well."
Tony "Did they? Did you go the year before?"
MD "Yeah I've been twice."
FO "Mum said I was nicer and, I don't know what that means."
Silence
Tony "What about the rest of you?"
FO "...and I....."
MD "Yeah I do things as well. I'm just normal...same as usual"
MO "Nobody's normal"
MS "No, now I can make a dolphin noise...Crraaaach, crraaaach!"
Laughter,

(Group interview, July 2005).

The issue of 'don't know' answers did not really arise. Instead, I allowed the children to have a degree of agency in controlling the direction of the discussions. Allowing the conversation to flow and allowing the children agency in constructing the agenda to be followed, in an informal way, had its drawbacks, however. One was in the tendency for the conversation to go off tangentially to what I thought to be interesting. Such as when MS decided to impersonate a dolphin (above). At times I had to intervene to re-focus them. Scott (2000) suggests that interviewer prompts

are essential when interviewing young adolescents such as these, and this was a technique I used numerous times during the interviews. For example -

Tony "OK that's what your mum says. What do you think?"

FO "Erm I don't know. I think I've changed "

Tony "How?"

FO "Well I never used to help, my sister did all the helping. Now I laid the table and wash my hair without asking. And have a shower without asking."

(Group interview, July 2005)

Scott also suggests the use of visual aids, useful when there are vocabulary problems and/or short attention spans (2000, p105). I took along photographs taken around Wild Country Hall to use as visual prompts and made extensive use of extracts from the narrative:- *Wild Country Hall A week in the life of a residential outdoor education centre* was a helpful way of doing this. In the following example, I began by reading part of the narrative with the same children as those above -

FB "How old were they?"

Tony "Same as you Year six Are you all the same age, all year six?"

FE "I'm year five "

Tony "Let's think about parts of the story. What about missing mums and dads?"

FB "I did"

MK "I did "

FE "I cried every night"

MK "I did at bit at first, the very first time Two years ago"

FB "When I was in the bus leaving them, I was. upset"

MK "I was laughing"

FB "But I wasn't really upset I was only upset for about 10 minutes, and then I forget about 'em for the whole. .but when she sent me letters and when I read those . ."

MK "You got embarrassed"

FB "No,"

(Group interview, May 2006)

At this point I wanted to return to explore her crying with FE, who had been almost silent in the first part of the interview.

Tony (to FE) "How do you feel about it now? You said you had cried a little bit, how do you feel about that now?"

FE "erm I feel OK now "

Tony "So if you had the chance to go again would you say yes or no?"

FE "I probably would go again because it was really fun and I probably wouldn't cry because I've already been there."

Silence.

Tony "Back to the Kirsty story what else did she say?"

FE "She said she wasn't scared of the water any more...and she put her hand up more."

Tony "Anything else?"

FE "She's become more confident...in herself."

FB "I nearly overcame my fear of spiders, I found one in the drawer."

Tony "Nearly, not quite?"

MK "I found one in my bed"

FB "Also when I went there I, I, I be more friends with lots of people. Because I normally just like have Emily but I was friends with, at one point I was like friends with everybody. Not friends, but I was friendly with..."

Tony "Has that lasted or was it just at the time?"

FB "It helps, yes. And also when I got back from Wild Country Hall my sister and my mum were nice to me, because they'd missed me so much."

MK "So were my sisters!"

Tony "What do you mean it helps?"

FB "Well instead of only having special friends, I have very special friends, special friends and just friends,"

(Group interview, May 2006).

Interviewing on home ground.

'Home ground' can be interpreted in two ways. It could mean the child's home, or it might mean another place that is more familiar to them than to the interviewer. Scott (2000) explains the importance of where interviews with children are carried out as it is likely to influence the way children respond. I fully accept that this is the case, but had little agency in the selection of place. I did not interview the children in their own homes for reasons including negotiating access and preferring to work with groups of children rather than individuals. The 2005 group discussions took place in a small classroom which was the only space available for us to use. A small number of children and I were sat around a table. This may have served to emphasise the power relationship embedded in the social context and generational order (Mayall, 2000): middle aged, male group 'facilitator' working with relatively young children

inside a classroom Morgan (1998) suggests establishing a mood that is relaxed and in which respondents feel at ease is important when working with children. In May 2006 the weather was very good in the week I was based in Small School and so I decided that the group discussions could take place in a small summer house in the school grounds. This created a quiet and convivial space in which I believe the *children were more relaxed and felt easy (Morgan, 1998)* and may have served also to de-power to a degree my position as adult

4.3.8 A critique of interviews.

A key question for me was what discursive practices interplay to construct the text produced during my interviews and discussions? These practices include those prevalent in the centre (see Chapters 2 and 5) and the homes and schools of the children, the discursive practices of children who had visited the Wild Country Hall centre and may have recently produced revised identities for themselves through the process of discursive positioning (Davies, 1990, 2004, Davies and Harré, 1990, Harré, 1983).

Then there are the discursive practices of the interviews themselves. Interviews are constructed from, and in, the discourse of power. Whilst there is some debate regarding the formality or otherwise of the interview (Gillham, 2000; Lawthorn, 2004), it is a formal and structured occasion with consequent implications. Power relationships will, in part, shape the narratives that are constructed in the interviews. Similarly with the group discussions, the spaces, people, the time of day, my presence with the Dictaphone, all of these will have had some bearing on the construction of the data represented in Chapter 5. At best, I can be open and honest in recognising this process.

One of the major criticisms that may be levelled at interview data is that although they allow some engagement with participants' retrospective views and thoughts about their experiences, these are distanced from the phenomena under investigation by the lapse of time. I do not see this as problematic and accept that constructions and reconstructions achieved through reflection and discussion are inevitable. The question is not 'are reconstructions of events taking place?', rather 'are interviews with individuals and groups any more vulnerable to such construction than any other type of qualitative inquiry?' Scheurich (1997) suggests not, arguing that during interviews the respondent adopts a variety of postures and makes different comments and remarks depending on feelings, moments of spontaneity and mood. The comments made by respondents to different interviewers in response to the same question will vary depending on indefinable and unpredictable circumstances. Consequently, changes of view, slippages and contradictions by respondents are bound to occur. The regularity with which different participants reported the same or similar substantive issues in response to open prompts from me, gives me confidence that these data are faithful representations of the things participants felt were important and wanted to talk about.

Narratives are important to my research. Some of my data are narratives produced by the participants and thus Andrews' (2000) ideas regarding narrative are relevant here. First, Andrews maintains that stories are the way we come to ascribe significance to experiences. I found that participant stories, represented in interview data, are how my participants have recognised and endorsed the importance of numerous discursive practices at Wild Country Hall. Andrews goes on to argue that

narratives are also the "means through which we constitute our very selves .we become who we are through telling stories about ourselves and living the stories we tell," (2000, pp 77-80) I liken this statement to Foucault's thesis that discourses are 'practices which form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972, p 49) In other words, discursive practices include meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on, which together produce a particular perspective, view or version of events at Wild Country Hall and shape the identities of the people involved in the experience

Once I had reflected on the process of data generation I was further convinced of the constructionist nature of my research. Constructionism was, I argue, at work on a number of stages of the research:-

- First I chose which group of children to spend time with on a day-by-day basis. This was done on a random or convenience basis.
- Second, I decided which particular events to observe. It is impossible for a researcher who is engaging in participant observation to observe everything. Consider a rope course for example; by placing myself at any one part of the course I can observe all of the children who progress to this point, but am ignoring other obstacles. Conversely, if I decide to follow a child around I can observe all aspects of the rope course, but I cannot see a range of children.
- Third, when I commit data to memory I might sub-consciously favour some data over others.
- Fourth, I am afterwards dependent on my recall of data which may again (subconsciously or consciously) be selective.

- Finally, I am active in selecting the precise words and tropes with which to record these memorised data.

4.4 The analysis and representation of data.

In this section I write about how I analysed data and then how I chose to represent some of this data in the thesis; especially why I chose to include a data rich narrative.

4.4.1. Analysis: what researchers do with data.

Analysis is a constructive process. As I have detailed above, my data generation began in February 2004 when I began searching the archives of Wild Country Hall and continued through to 2010 when I conducted the final interview with the Head of Small School. I began the process of data analysis as soon as I began transcribing my field notes and later my taped interview data. To a large extent my data analysis has been an iterative process as I have continually revisited data throughout this period.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued that an iterative approach to the collection, coding and analysis of data is vital to the successful generation of Grounded Theory. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) value this iterative approach to the generation and analysis of data, arguing that themes generated in the early stages of the analysis can be brought into the field and verified through more observations. Whilst 'verification' is not a part of the methodological approach I have developed, nevertheless, I have found it most useful to take with me to the field insights that I have generated from the data. This is part of the inductive approach I outlined above in part 1 of this chapter.

Coding the data using qualitative computer software.

Following interviews, I transcribed the data using Microsoft Word and stored it on my computer hard drive with back-up on a memory stick and portable hard drive. Later in the research process I needed to work through my data in a more systematic way in order to develop the themes, or codes, that would shape and structure the thesis. To help me do this I chose to use a qualitative data analysis QSR NVivo N6 software package, which would allow me to code the transcribed data according to my chosen themes and later retrieve that data under code headings

Coffey (1996) argues that it is the uncritical adoption and use of software by users, rather than software itself, that can create problems. Charmaz (2000, pp 520-521) makes a number of criticisms of the use of software by qualitative researchers. First, she suggests these methods are used to legitimate rather than conduct studies. This may well be the case, but I do not think this charge can be substantiated in the context of my research. I have used the NVivo N6 software as a tool, in much the same way as I have used the Microsoft Word word-processing software and the EndNote reference managing software. I have found all of these technologies useful in writing my research, but for pragmatic reasons rather than to legitimise my study. Second, Charmaz argues that software seems more suited to objectivist rather than constructivist approaches. Here I disagree with her. If software is used to quantify entries into codes, and if cross code analysis is for verification, then Charmaz may have a valid criticism. However, software can be seen as a tool to construction; used to help produce themes and meanings as I have done in my research. Third, she argues software may foster the notion that interpretive work can be reduced to a set of procedures. I agree this may be a danger, but it is for the researcher who is using

the software to reject such reductionism and procedural conformity, and work within a critical awareness of the possibilities and pitfalls.

NVivo N6 was at the time the qualitative data analysis software of choice of the University of Plymouth and so is easily available as the University subscribes to the software. Discussions with colleagues who use N6 and have experience of other qualitative data analysis software (Nudist, Qualcom) indicated that QSR NVivo N6 would be adequate for my purposes. I attended a short training course, used the electronic training program and spent some time with a more experienced colleague who had offered some mentoring in its use.

Richards and Richards (1994) have argued that the code-and-retrieve method embedded within QSR NVivo N6 supports the emergence of theory by searching the data for codes and assembling ideas. Some of their language, such as 'emergence', 'theory' and 'searching for' conflicts with my constructionist view. Yet, when rewritten as *the code-and-retrieve method embedded within N6 supports the construction of knowledge by helping the researcher to search the data for themes and assembling meaning around them*, Richards and Richards' (1994) reasons for using NVivoN6 seem consistent with my chosen approach.

Themes [codes] constructed through the analysis process.

I initially identified 13 themes running through the data. These were:-

- 1 Child protection
- 2 Investment in children
- 3 Over- protection of children
- 4 Value for money

5 Formalisation/ homogenisation of learning

6 Conservation /environment

7 Facing and over-coming challenges

8 Sense of place: the "great outdoors"

9 Encouraging independence

10 Homesickness

11 Awe and wonder

12 Neo-Hahnian confidence building

13 Sense of enjoyment

This list is in the order that these themes appeared in the data

On re-reading the data value for money turned out to be represented by only one comment and therefore I deleted it as a theme. I rationalised the themes into five, which are -

1 Child protection / over protection

2 Formalisation/ homogenisation of learning

3 Conservation /environment

4 Sense of place: the "great outdoors" / Awe and wonder

5 Facing and over-coming challenges including homesickness / Neo-Hahnian confidence building / Encouraging independence

I asked an expert; Randal Williams, Chair of the English Outdoor Council, an EdD student at Exeter University, and a former Head of an outdoor education centre, to check these five themes against the data, to see if I had missed anything and to corroborate the themes. Taking into account the comments received from him, and

later from the Head of Small School, I eventually decided on four themes and it is these that I focus on and write about in the chapter on findings:-

- Place. The “great outdoors” awe and wonder, environmental appreciation, conservation and sustainability.
- Going away from home and family. Facing and overcoming fears; which may include encountering and coping with homesickness. Living with people in a residential context different to home, encountering strange customs and unfamiliar social practices there. Fears of heights or water.
- Confidence and resilience building, within a framework of manufactured challenges, and encouraging calculated risk taking.
- The formalisation of learning and classroom discourses which seemed to have affected the organisation of learning and the pedagogic practices at Wild Country Hall

4.4.2 The representation of data.

In this section I want to explain why I chose to represent some of my data in narrative form, as *Wild Country Hall: A week in the life of a residential outdoor education centre* (Chapter 5, part 1). I also set out to explain the process of constructing the narrative.

Why include a data-rich narrative?

By including a story about Wild Country Hall I am able to fore-ground two important concepts - ‘narrative’ and ‘data’ - and create space to discuss the complexity of both in my research. In many ethnographic works, telling stories from the field precedes their analysis. Jeffrey maintains that it is necessary “...to address the problem of

how we can describe what is happening. .rather than attempt initially to explain what is happening" (2006, p. 59). Following this, I chose to situate *Wild Country Hall. A week in the life of a residential outdoor education centre* at the beginning of Chapter 5, before attempting to explain practices at the centre, and invited readers unfamiliar with outdoor centres to read this narrative first.

Theorising narrative.

Like all research and academic writing my data-rich narrative was written partly for rhetorical purposes (Sparkes, 2002) I wrote this narrative with the prime purpose of persuading readers of the importance of my research by introducing it to them holistically and thus engaging them with it. I did not aim for reader analysis Van Maanen suggests that when researchers hold back on their interpretations, stick to the story, they are in effect saying "here is this world, make of it what you will," (1988, p. 103) and Clough seems to support this in suggesting that his stories speak for themselves as research (Clough, 2002a) I see analysis as the work of the researcher, not the reader There must be a place for those researchers who deploy narratives for whatever purpose to also offer their 'reading' of their texts, their analysis of data, for not to do so may render their work as non-research My main intention in including this data-rich narrative, and in inviting readers to turn to it first if they so wish, is to provide readers with an impression of a week at Wild Country Hall "from beginning to end and thus draw them immediately into the story. its problems and puzzles as they unfold," (Van Maanen, 1988, p 103). The storied approach was chosen to engage readers and to "spark [their] interest and involvement" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 103) with the issues that are to be developed and explained in this thesis

Stories, whilst passing on a sense of 'feel' and place, also offer a particularly good way of conveying complexity and ambiguity (Sikes and Piper, 2009). Though it may be counter-argued that stories allow researchers to write simplified or 'tidied' and unambiguous accounts, I have resisted such temptations. Examples of ambiguity can be seen in the failure to overcome the challenges of the neo-Hahnian model (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b) that I have fore-grounded through the character of Josh and the way adults dealt with this. There is ambiguity in devoting much time to sedentary plenary information sessions as part of an outdoor adventure experience, and in how children respond to this.

Fiction, ethnographic fiction, creative non-fiction.

The status of my narrative warrants discussion. Have I written fiction, ethnographic fiction, creative non-fiction, or something else? Understandings of the distinctions seem muddled in the literature. For example, Beames and Pike refer to their writing as "creative fiction" (2008, p. 4), but go on to point out that this is done for a precise purpose, "to create a story with the explicit aim of raising important questions for practitioners and theorists"; thus as a methodology rather than a literary genre of communication. Sparkes (2002) argues that writing cannot be thought of as fiction when data comes from observations of participants and researcher imagination does not play a part. Instead, he introduces the concept of creative non-fiction as a way of writing research. I prefer to see my story as a 'data-rich narrative', rather than a piece of fictional writing (Beames and Pike, 2008) or creative non-fiction (Sparkes, 2002). In writing this story I have certainly 'made' characters and events from data, I have been creative. Yet I would strongly argue that they are not 'made up' in the traditional sense of a work of fiction. 'Made' rather than 'made up' is an important distinction. My story, and the characters within it, are there in order to faithfully

communicate my understanding of what I have read, observed and been told, rather than having been made up, in the sense of being fabricated

Sparkes (2002) argues that all writers employ literary tropes in order to persuade and convince, with writers calling upon various literary and rhetorical devices. The narrative trope can be considered as just one of a range of available literary methods to be employed in academic writing. The question here is what particular advantages do I see in a storied approach? Stories may be considered the most natural form of oral and literary communication. Humans have resorted to tale telling to communicate meaning for countless generations. Narrative, in the form of books, film and stage drama, is still highly valued in modern societies. Why are stories so common in the human endeavour of communicating to each other? Presumably it is because they provide a kind of description that seems to be holistic, (they have a beginning, a middle and an ending) as well as evocative and sometimes emotionally engaging. These are the exact same qualities that Rinehart (1998, pp. 205-206) evokes as the basis of the credibility of contemporary storied academic writing.

Analysis seems to have replaced narrative as part of the Enlightenment project that characterises Modernism. Both Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and Sparkes (2002) draw attention to the dominance in academic literature during the period 1945-1970 of "valid, reliable and objective" accounts and interpretations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 12). Until 1970 social researchers "attempted to formalise...qualitative research as rigorous as its quantitative counterpart" (Sparkes, 2002, pp. 3-4) by using the "language and rhetoric of positivism and postpositive discourse." (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 14). This language is fundamentally analytical and

theoretical. More recently, however, narrative and story have become fashionable as part of a so called narrative turn, (e.g. Richardson, 2000; Richardson and St Pierre, 2005; Sikes and Piper, 2009; Sparkes, 1997, 2002).

The second part of the answer [to the question 'what particular advantages may be contained in a narrative or storied approach?'] lies in the power of stories in communicating to the reader by aesthetic engagement; in other words, by opening the senses of readers with powerful narratives, and literary techniques such as strong characterisation and dialogue. It certainly allowed me the opportunity of communicating in what I felt to be a more natural form. In my storied presentation of data I felt able to use the literary technique of 'showing' through the actions and dialogue of characters, rather than 'telling' in the words of a passive third party voice. I found this a powerful advantage of the narrative approach.

Providing enhanced anonymity.

'Fictionalising' also offers a secure way of maintaining the anonymity of the centre and especially the research participants. This was one reason why Sikes and Piper (2009) used composite characters in their study of teachers who experienced allegations of sexual misconduct. For, as readers know the story is fictioned, they also know that those appearing in it are also fictitious; not simply changed names, but caricatures that, though made from data, do not represent any particular participant. I feel this to be particularly important when reporting on situations where (child) participants are upset, frightened and annoyed. Measures to preserve participant anonymity are usually promised by most social researchers. Using pseudonyms (i.e. fictional names) is one common way of achieving this (Sparkes, 2002) because it helps to disguise the collective and individual identities of

participants Sometimes researchers go further along this fictional road for it is often necessary (or at least desirable) to change geographic locations, institution names, and possibly 'fudge' who said what in order to further protect participants (Beames and Pike, 2008; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

Some researchers have found it necessary to go yet further, and have used fictional accounts specifically to offer enhanced anonymity to participants in their research For example, in Clough (2002b) the character 'Rob' intervenes in a classroom incident which results in an assault on a pupil Rob stands accused of both actual bodily harm against the pupil and sexual harassment of his younger, female colleague. Both events (the assault and the accusations of harassment) were reported to Clough by research participants to whom he wanted to offer enhanced protection The conflation of their accounts into a fictional story and a fictional character, Rob, facilitates enhanced protection Similarly, Frank (2002) employs fictional stories to offer enhanced protection and anonymity to her research participants, all of whom were either sex industry workers, some of whom may have taken part in illegal practices, or regular male visitors to strip clubs who did not want their wives or partners to stumble upon their identities

Participants such as those in Clough (2002b) and Frank (2002) may be considered to be potentially 'vulnerable', or at risk, because of their circumstances and thus deserving a higher degree of anonymity than others The participants in my research are perhaps not so vulnerable in a general sense, yet there are occasions and incidents represented in my data-rich narrative where an enhanced degree of

anonymity is appropriate. For example, there is a particular instance that takes place in the lounge where the adults are gathered one evening:-

Edyta is reading through the postcards that children have written to send home. At first she is interested in some of the misspellings on the cards.

"David jumped off the cupboard...C-U-B-E-R-D"...what kind of spelling is that? They all laugh.

Then she happens upon that post card Johnny wrote earlier.

She reads aloud to the others, "It is really bad here I don't like it. The door does not get locked at night. A mad-man could get in and murder us".

I think there are ethical issues with the actions I observed in the lounge on such occasions. It might be considered that a trust was broken. By conflating data from my observations from the interviews with adults, it is possible to give enhanced anonymity to the adult who chose to read from the postcards. Also, by attributing some of the writing to fictional characters 'Edyta' and 'Johnny', enhanced anonymity is afforded to the participants in the research.

Fore grounding data.

Making use of a narrative approach to the representation of data allows me the space to discuss the status of data in my ethnography. 'Data', so too the collection of them, are problematic terms in constructionist, qualitative research that attempts to make meaning from linguistic text. Stables has suggested that "linguistic 'data' form patterns only in discursive space" (2003, p.900) and are thus unlike data as conceived in scientific, positivist terms where patterns of data constitute phenomena. He goes on to problematise the concept of a linguistic datum, pointing out that "individual words and sounds not contextualised within utterances make no sense...and utterances make sense only within discourse practices," (Stables, 2003, p.900). Whilst this seems a secure argument, it is nevertheless useful to differentiate between the utterances (in written and spoken text) of the participants in my

research and those of myself. Similarly, it is useful to differentiate between my notes on observations made at the beginning of this research project and my later thoughts. Writing about data, using extracts from data and including data in my appendices are useful ways of doing this.

Crafting the narrative from data.

Bourdieu reminds me that "facts are made, fabricated, constructed, that observations are not independent of theory" and that I and the participants in my research "are collaborators in a work of interpretation," (1977, pp. 164-5). *Wild Country Hall: A week in the life of a residential outdoor education centre* is fundamentally my interpretation of data generated from archive searches, observations in the field and interviews.

The greater part of the dialogue in my story uses direct quotes from my data. This facilitates participant voice to be presented to the reader in a far more natural way, without the interruptions of citation detail and my reflections on them. Thus, many of the utterances of the participants are first encountered by the reader in an unencumbered way, without the theorisation or analysis which follows it in Chapter 5.

The technique I employed in the construction of this story was to conflate, merge or amalgamate data. I then presented this data through a number of 'characters' who take part in a series of events. In doing this I am following the example set by Clough (2002a) when he amalgamates data from a number of derivations into one or more 'fictional characters'. On one occasion in producing the data-rich narrative, I make use of my own memory to enrich the narrative. The relevant part of the story is this -

Josh begins to climb, very slowly, uncertain of his hand and foot holds. He gets about two metres off the ground then stops.

"I can't do it!" he calls.

Much encouragement from the group, "come on Josh!" they shout.

He makes an attempt to shift his right foot, then freezes.

"I can't do it!"

All of his weight is now on his left leg, and Josh can feel it twitching and jerking. He is really afraid now. He can feel cold on his brow as the sweat formed there, and on his hands, evaporates in the chill wind.

"I can't do it! I can't do it! I'm not doing it!"

Most of this extract was constructed from field notes written following a climbing incident at the centre I observed in February 2005. A boy was stuck on the climbing wall in the manner described here. I made the notes soon after returning from the field (appendix 3.2.3) and later wrote a vignette for use in presentations (e.g. Rea, 2007a) and a paper eventually published as Rea, 2008b.

When writing *Wild Country Hall: A week in the life of a residential outdoor education centre* for this thesis, I made use of a version of the vignette which had appeared in Rea, 2008b. There I had written that:-

Josh makes an attempt to shift his right foot, then freezes.

"I can't do it! I can't do it! I'm not doing it!"

I was dissatisfied with the brevity of this, for I realised it did not fully represent the tension in the events I had observed. I wanted to evoke some of the fear and panic contained in the situation I was trying to describe. Considering this episode reminded me very much of an event in my own past. When aged 12 I was rock climbing in north Wales and became stuck – immobilised and unable to climb higher. I froze and panicked. I can distinctly recall the twitching sensation in my leg and the sweat on my brow. I decided to elaborate the vignette basing my writing on my data but also on these memories. Thus, the feelings attributed to Josh in the data rich narrative

are based on my own memory of being terrified as a boy in very similar circumstances. The following three sentences appear within the final version:-

All of his weight is now on his left leg, and Josh can feel it twitching and jerking. He is really afraid now. He can feel cold on his brow as the sweat formed there, and on his hands, evaporates in the chill wind.

The construction of characters:-

To an extent 'Josh' is a pseudonym for an actual participant and so my writing about him departs little from traditional academic writing where pseudonyms are used to preserve participant anonymity and confidentiality. A particular boy who visited the centre in February 2005 provided the prototype for Josh. Younger than most participants, he found himself struggling a number of times and was the boy who became stuck on the climbing wall. But Josh is also a conflation of a number of other male participants, one female participant, and my own memories of being frightened on a rock climb at about that age, and in these ways may be considered more fictional.

Likewise the character named 'Johnny' began by being closely based on participants, this time two boys who visited Wild Country Hall in 2005. However, I choose to express facets of many other children through Johnny when his character fit their personality and behaviour. In this way Johnny is unlike Josh, because this character is an amalgamation of data from a far larger number of participants.

'Kirsty' is an even more fictitious character. Though there are strong elements of two girls who I observed at the centre, one in November 2004 the other in February 2005, and on visits to their respective schools, Kirsty also has elements of many other participants influencing her.

Jean, Steven and Nettie are minor characters and are the conflation of numerous data. Edyta is an amalgam of all the classroom assistants and adult helpers I observed at Wild Country Hall. Mick is based closely on the male parent helper who accompanied Small School and Martin Brennan is based closely on the Head Teacher of Small School. Rob is an amalgam of all the centre instructors, except for the Head of centre, on whom the character Pete Bromley is based.

Verisimilitude.

I shared the data-rich narrative with three experts:-

- A parent. The mother of four children all of whom had been away from home at age 10-11, on residential visits organised by their primary schools.
- The recently-retired Head Teacher of Small School.
- Randal Williams the Chair of the English Outdoor Council, an EdD student at Exeter University, and a former Head of an outdoor education centre.

I did this, looking for confirmation of verisimilitude in my narrative. Verisimilitude, the appearance of truth, was developed from the ideas of Bruner who attended to the notion of different modes of thought: the logico-scientific and the narrative, (Bruner, 1986). It was later developed by Schwandt (1997) and Sparkes (2002). Verisimilitude is a useful, alternative basis for the judgment of the robustness and value of narrative research. Schwandt (1997) has developed the work of Bruner and suggests three uses of verisimilitude in qualitative research texts:-

- As a criterion for judging the quality of narrative inquiry.
- As a criterion for judging the evocative power or sense of authenticity of a textual portrayal.

- As a statement of the relationship between a particular text and the conventions of its genre.

All three readers felt that the story resonated with their experience. For example, Williams commented on the rich descriptions of centre life,

“ the descriptions are vivid; as an ex-centre director, they took me right back to my old workplace,”

(Personal e-mail communication with Randal Williams, March, 2010)

The parent made only one comment. She pointed out that the reaction of Daniel's mother in the draft she had, did not resonate with her. In that draft I had Daniel cry to his mother, who meekly replied that he need not go. The mother I asked to read the narrative said that she would have done more to urge him to go. Parents have different values and views about bringing up their children, and I could not capture *this diversity in one scene in my narrative. What I eventually wrote was -*

“Daniel remains on the roadside holding his mother's hand. This Easter trip will be the second time he has been to Wild Country; and the second time he has been away from home. Last time he was really homesick and he is worried about what it might be like this time. He looks up at his mum, “I don't want to go!” He begins to cry.
What is said between them cannot be heard by anybody on the coach.”

In this way, by keeping the conversation between Daniel and his mother secret, I was able to accommodate multiple possibilities.

Part of my second interview with the head of Small School, in May 2010, focussed on verisimilitude in the narrative. When asked about this he said -

“.. it will give a reader an overview of the centre and how it works, and the children's experiences. You have pulled together a great deal of material from your observations. You have left some activities out, but it gives a fair account. It's engaging to read. And when reading other chapters (I had also

sent him the introduction and Chapter 5) it enables a reader to 'flick-back', not literally, but to contextualise what they are encountering within a narrative,"

(Interview with Head Teacher, May, 2010).

I then asked if there were there any aspects of the story that did not 'ring true' with him. He answered:-

"I wonder with the homesickness, have you gone OTT (over the top)? I can't recall so many children talking to us about it. The boy Daniel (character in the story) I don't recall anything like that. There was one boy who was undecided. His mother hadn't paid but we left it open. He could have arrived on the Monday morning and she could have paid later. But he didn't turn up...and the reading of the postcards. There was only one, [a teacher] picked it up and we decided not to post it. But I handed it to the parents later and explained why we did what we did. But that apart, your story does its job, it will give a reader who does not know [Wild Country Hall], or centres a good introduction, set the scene,"

(Interview with Head Teacher, May, 2010).

I was pleased with this response. Part of my purpose is to provide readers who are unfamiliar with Wild Country Hall with an overview of the life and work of outdoor centres. The Head's comment "your story does its job, it will give a reader who does not know [Wild Country Hall], or centres a good introduction, set the scene" indicates that in his opinion this has been largely achieved. The comments about me perhaps having focussed too closely, or too much, on homesickness is interesting and two comments can be made to contextualise this. First, this Head Teacher knows only the practices of his school and his pupils when they are at Wild Country Hall, whereas I had contact with, and constructed data from, two additional schools. The data-rich narrative was constructed from data from all the schools involved. Second, he says "I can't recall so many children talking to us about it" and this is probably so. I am not surprised that the children felt freer to talk about this with me than with their teachers, they were talking to me in a very different context. Some of

my prompts and follow up questions, and some of the extracts that I used with them, focussed them on the topic of homesickness, it already having been observed during my ethnography

The head's comment regarding the postcard is refreshingly open and honest. I had reservations about listening to the adults discussing children's postcards, and his comment "there was only one, [a teacher] picked it up and we decided not to post it. But, I handed it to the parents later and explained why we did what we did" seems to provide a fitting conclusion to my dilemma. Johnny's postcard [figure 5] and the reading aloud of it by the adults, however, was based upon my observations of teachers and adults from Suburbia Row School not Small School.

4.5 Summary.

Robson (2002) focuses on trustworthiness as the goal of research when he asks:

"...how do you persuade your audiences, including most importantly yourself, that the findings of your enquiry are worth taking account of? What is it that makes the study believable and trustworthy?"

(Robson, 2002, p. 68).

If I accept the literal meanings of words, I would say that a disadvantage of my adoption of qualitative research is that it renders my research non-generalisable, unreliable and invalid. Nevertheless, I will argue that my research is robust, trustworthy and useful.

Generalisability, reliability and validity are the goals of scientific and some social-scientific research (Kvale, 1996, chap. 13; Robson, 2002, pp. 66-72). They have not proved to be useful terms in my research project for the following reasons:

- Robson's defines generalisability as "the extent to which the findings of the enquiry are more generally applicable" (2002, p. 66). Generalisability is often the product of large scale quantitative research which I have not set out to undertake. My research is only relevant in the context of Wild Country Hall and the participants I visited with and talked to afterwards. The findings of my research cannot be generalised from nor applied to other contexts in any positivist way. Having said all of this, the 'lay' meanings of general, reliable and valid may have some resonance with my research. I would argue that my findings may be useful to practitioners working or making use of other, similar centres because the phenomena, reactions to them and means of processing these may be similar. If I have confidence in my findings (which I do) I can argue that they may shed light on, or provide useful perspectives for the study of, residential outdoor education centres more generally. But anybody seeking to use my findings to illuminate their understanding of other similar centres or residential experiences, should do so with care.
- Reliability usually refers to how consistent results are (Kvale, 1996, p. 88). I agree with Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) that reliability has largely become a redundant notion in qualitative research. This is because of the particularity of research settings and the individuality and distinctiveness of the research participants. However, there was a strong sense of themes recurring in my data, which gives me confidence in the claims I can make from the research.
- I take validity to mean whether a study investigates what is intended to be investigated (Kvale, 1996, p. 88), and seems to me only to make sense when

used to verify the method used in a hypothetico-deductive process. Validity does not apply at all well to the inductive process I have tried to follow. Alternatively, I might concur with Cohen, *et al.* (2000) that every interpersonal situation is valid; which is why Thomas is able to state that 'qualitative inquiry is absolutely valid' (2007, p. 118). In a very broad sense I might claim a certain validity in the research, for I set out to investigate children's experiences at a residential outdoor activities centre and this is what the data and findings strongly relate to.

Rather than be bound by the literal meanings of such terms 'generalisable', 'reliable' and 'valid' I have found it useful to ask "how can I demonstrate that I have confidence in my data, my analysis and my findings?"

- First, I would argue that this is shown in the integrity and consistency of my chosen research approach that moves from an inductive and constructive epistemology to a qualitative methodology
- Second, it is confirmed by a robust, rigorous and ethically sound approach to data generation and analysis.
- Third, it is established through my honest, transparent and reflexive account of the process.

Chapter 5: Wild Country Hall: Findings [in discursive space].

"Perhaps the best way to read this...is to let the stories speak to you first (without the interruption of my own methodological and ethical positioning) and then to move on to my own readings of them."

(Clough, 2002a, p. 7)

"By holding back on interpretation and sticking to the story [some are] saying, in effect, "here is this world, make of it what you will." "

(Van Maanen, 1988, p. 102)

A chapter on 'findings' in a thesis that claims to embrace social constructionism is problematic. After all, that which is 'found' was there all along. I sub-titled this chapter '*findings [in discursive space]*' to remind myself and readers of this. When I write about findings, I am really writing about my construction of a new synthesis of thinking about learning in outdoor centres.

In Chapter 1 I invited readers without background knowledge of residential outdoor learning to start reading here. The following narrative, *Wild Country Hall: A week in the life of a residential outdoor education centre* is my construction based on what I observed there, how I interpreted what others wrote about the centre and what they told me about their experiences. This may be what Geertz meant by "second and third order interpretations" (1973, p. 15). Clough (2002a) suggests that an advantage of using storied approaches that do not make findings explicit is that readers are allowed - compelled even - to construct their own findings. This may be so, but reader analysis is not my purpose. First and foremost I want to provide my readers with an overview.

5.1 Wild Country Hall: A week in the life of a residential outdoor education centre.

Monday morning, Anyshire.

It is early morning and thirty-two children and their parents wait by the elderly, red coach. The engine is running, keeping the inside warm, but belching thick diesel fumes into the air. The children are excited and expectant, some are nervous. Daniel, clings to his mother's arm. Bags are lifted into the coach's holds supervised by Martin Brennan, the Head Teacher of Small School. Martin has an easy air of authority about him, he has been taking children to Wild Country Hall for eighteen years and is looking forward to this next trip.

Children begin to climb onto the coach while their parents wait.

Josh nudges the arm of Johnny, who is sat next to him.

"I'm not looking forward to this", he says. "I don't like travelling long distances. And I'm afraid of heights. What if it turns out to be awful?"

"It'll be OK", Johnny replies. "You know you like water. Just think of the surfing and canoeing!"

Daniel remains on the roadside holding his mother's hand. This Easter trip will be the second time he has been to Wild Country, and the second time he has been away from home. Last time he was really homesick and he is worried about what it might be like this time. He looks up at his mum, "I don't want to go!" He begins to cry.

What is said between them cannot be heard by anybody on the coach.

Martin looks at them, pauses for a while, then removes Daniel's bag from the hold.

As Martin climbs onto the coach, Daniel and his mother walk towards their car. The driver revs the engine and the coach slowly moves away. Mums, dads, children and teachers wave. They're off at last.

On the bus to Wild Country Hall.

Most of the children are very quiet on the journey.

"Are we nearly there, Mr Brennan?" asks Johnny for what must the fifteenth time.

"I feel sick!" murmurs Kirsty.

"She looks right pale, Sir" adds Nettie.

"Where's the bags Edyta?" shouts Mick.

Kirsty sits with a paper bag at the ready. Though she looks very pale, somehow she manages to stave off the nausea until the stop at a motorway service station.

"Half an hour, driver?" asks Martin, and gets a nod in return.

Martin, Jean, Mick and Edyta sit and drink coffee, the children play on the electronic amusement games, some browse the shop; the driver smokes outside.

As they pull off again, Mick, in an attempt to raise spirits shouts out "shall we have a sing-song?"

"No!!" is the collective response.

"Quiet in their thoughts, eh? Quiet in their thoughts", says Jean.

Monday early afternoon, arrival and settling in.

At 12.30 the coach makes a left turn off the 'A' road and rumbles slowly along the single track drive to the centre. Excited children gaze out of the steamy windows as they get their first glimpse of Wild Country Hall. As he drives past them, Josh looks first at the beech and oak trees, then the buildings, eyes glued to the window of the

coach When they eventually stop, the children point one way at the sea and the other towards the open moorland, both within walking distance

Rod climbs onto the coach to greet everybody Then, with Martin, he reads off lists of names Groups of boys and girls are allocated to their rooms. Wild Country Hall provides warm and dry dormitory accommodation for up to 34 children, and soon they are putting their bags and belongings into 'their' dorms Martin and the other adults move their gear to their allocated rooms for the week

As it is a mild, dry day packed lunches, sandwiches, crisps and fruit brought from home, are eaten on the grass and picnic area Some of the children play on the slide There is much running around as the children make up for being sat on the bus for four hours

After lunch, Pete Bromley, the Head of Wild Country Hall centre, assembles all of the children in the lounge for their first briefing. Johnny and Josh take their places along with the other children The lounge is large enough for most of the children to sit on comfy chairs with only a few of them on the floor. The lounge overlooks the garden where pheasants saunter around, providing a mild distraction to some of the children In one corner is a piano The walls are decorated with photographs of children from previous visits, and a large map of the area surrounding the centre. At the front of the lounge is a white board and computer, which Pete now uses to introduce the centre, and to explain to the children what lies in store.

Pete begins with a short safety briefing.

"Absolutely no running inside " he says. "Now, what do you think is the most likely cause of accidents here at Wild Country Hall?"

Many children raise their hands.

"Yes?" enquires Pete, indicating a boy at the back with his hand up. "What's your name?"

"Johnny . Falling off a rope!"

"No; let's try you". Pete points to Josh.

"Drowning in the sea", says Josh with glee.

Kirsty does not volunteer an answer.

After a few more plausible, but incorrect suggestions, Pete provides the answer himself.

"Its fingers trapped in doors!" he announces. "So you need to be really careful around the place...and no running".

Next Pete explains about the Eco-Centre status of Wild Country Hall.

"Wild Country Hall is an Eco-Centre, part of the Eco-Schools. Small School is an Eco-School so you should know something about it already. We try to involve you in the decision making, planning and activities. So you will all be involved. We've published our own code of practice, the Wild Country Hall Eco Code which encourages whole centre action for the environment. It's simple, the future of our environment is in your hands", and Pete points at the children. "So, what will you be doing?"

Pete puts a PowerPoint slide onto the white board screen.

Wild Country Hall Eco-Centre Aims

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

- Enrich the centre grounds
- Reduce our impact on activity sites
- Monitor and reduce weekly energy consumption
- Raise awareness of healthy living in conjunction with Healthy Schools
- Encourage responsible purchasing

"Each day starts with Happy Hour"

Cheers from the children

"when all the children enjoy themselves doing duties. .", he continues, to some muted moans and groans from the assembly.

".and you will all get a go at being Eco-Warriors! Eco-Warriors do the recycling. We also have a competition At the start of each new group's stay with us, we measure the electricity and water they use We measure these again on the last day. So, turn off lights and make sure all the taps are turned off properly . no waste!"

Eventually, the briefing over, everyone gets ready to go outside

Monday later in the afternoon, the low ropes course

At around 3 00 pm the first outdoor session is the low ropes course. The adults attach themselves to a small group of children. There is much dashing about, in and

out, over and under, much laughing and shouting. One or two falls, nothing serious.



Figure 2 'Elvis' Walk on the Low Ropes course.

Nettie shouts "Mrs Hughes, Johnny put mud in the tyre. Josh and me got mud on our Tee-shirts."

Then the children are taken back inside and Pete talks to the group about the centre's aims and objectives; the learning outcomes that the centre expects children to achieve.

Another diagram is placed onto the whiteboard screen -

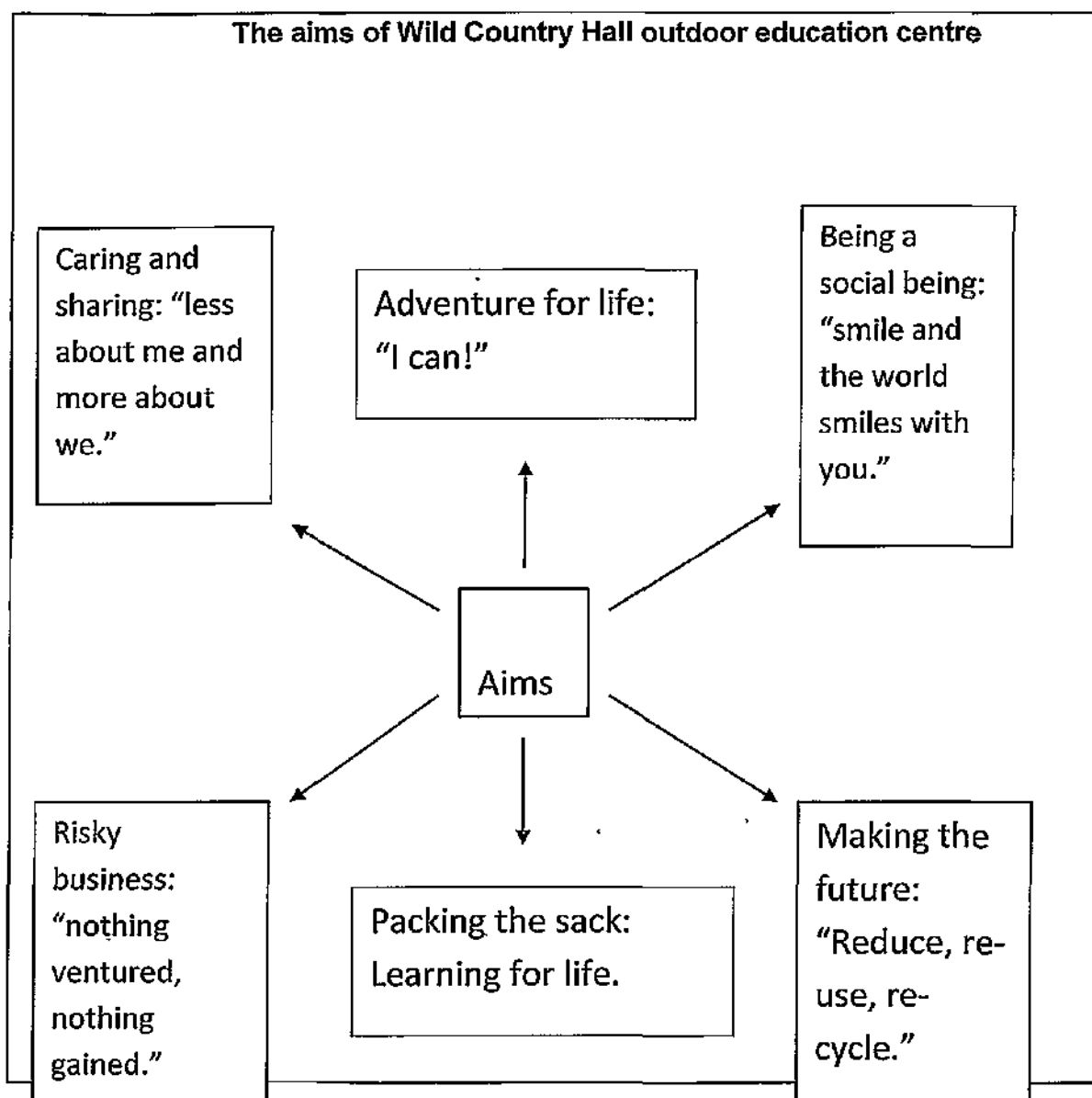


Table 4 The Learning Goals.

As Pete tries to explain each of the learning goals, intended learning outcomes, to the children, some of them begin to show signs of restlessness. Josh begins to fidget. He seems more interested in the pheasants outside than on the learning outcomes. He accidentally nudges Johnny, who seems irritated by this. A rumpus ensues. Martin Brennan glares at the two boys, with little effect.

Johnny seems to be getting angry with Josh.

"Stop pushing me you loser!" he says. It is neither a shout, nor a whisper.

Martin hears him. "No talking" he says, glaring at both boys again.

"....adventure for life is about two things", continues Pete. "First it's about doing things safely, and second it's about carrying on doing them once you leave us. I happen to know that there is a rock climbing wall quite near to your sch....."

"Just stop it!" yells Johnny as he shoves Josh away from him.

"Johnny Morris! Stop that now!"

It is Martin who intervenes. "Stand up and come here right now, young man, and stand outside in the corridor".

Pete plods along with the learning outcomes. The children have been sat in the lounge for just over an hour.

Monday, after dinner

At night there is an orienteering activity around the centre grounds. Children are in teams following clues to find stamps and place these on maps. It is dark.

"It's too dark" says Kirsty.

"I know, I don't like it", agrees Nettie. "What might be out there?"

"Ghosts!" suggests Penny.

"I don't believe in ghosts", declares Kirsty.

"Murderers then!"

"Stop it! I'm scared!"

Monday, night

It is 10 00 o'clock and, after a cup of hot chocolate, the children go to bed.

Martin sounds the fire alarm

The children run out of the building, some shout They assemble on the hard-court area Martin supervises the register check. All are present.

"OK, we will have to do that again", he announces, "next time, you walk, silently!"

They are sent back to their dorms They try again Then a third time They seem to take a long time to get the message, no running, no noise

It is cold standing on the hard-court in pyjamas and dressing gowns.

Monday night, in the lounge

"Some of them are still awake", comments Edyta. Do you think they might be homesick?"

"Yes, I'm sure some will be", replies Martin

"How much do you prepare them for that before they come?" asks Mick, who has not been around the school to observe any preparation

"To be honest, Mick, very little. Because the more you talk about it, the more they are going to feel it. So we always take them away with assurances, they know Jean is always round the corner. They know that we're here. They've known us for a long time "

He looks at Jean, "we have both been used to sitting with a foot in the door of a dormitory reading a book while a child is being reassured that we are still there Only once I think we've had an extreme case of homesickness when a child for most of the night demanded she go home She got up next morning and you wouldn't have known it, she was straight into the activity She did it again to us the second night.

Third night, she was so tired she slept and there wasn't a problem the rest of the week. When she got off the bus at the end of the week, she told her mum she had had a great week. No, we don't prepare them for homesickness, because I think we could create images that I don't want to try to live up to. We deal with it when it happens. We don't let the parents ring them. We don't let them take mobile phones, we try to avoid that."

"Are you saying, homesickness is not a big problem, it happens and when it happens it is dealt with?" asks Mick.

"Yes. But you see, were doing this as part of the residential and that separation from home is a unique experience in their lives and for some it is going to create a homesickness. We deal with it. They deal with it. When they come away from Wild Country Hall they've dealt with it."

"What about Daniel?"

"When he came with us last time, that was the first time he had been away from home. It was a major shock to him. No, he won't come back. But then, I think Daniel has been spoilt. Wherever the family go he sits and is waited on hand and foot. He's a little treasure! He is never expected to do anything for himself."

"I think it was...Susan", adds Edyta, "...you know, last year. She was in a dreadful state, and Aisha was in the same room and I remember saying to them that there's nothing wrong with being homesick. It's actually completely normal. It's how you deal with it and how you get over that. I said to her, "I expect your mum and dad are at home thinking about you and thinking you're having a fantastic time and so you should think good things about them and not lie here wasting your time being upset". But, I told her, don't think there is anything wrong with you for being homesick".

"She coped well, she coped well", recalls Mick.

Monday night, the children play and chatter

Six girls decide to have a pillow fight

Charlotte: "Ha, ha Now let's all get into Karen's bed. Except me!"

Karen "And me!"

Four girls pile into one bed, then they switch to a second

Karen: "Arrrgh!"

Charlotte: "Now all into Lorna's bed! Ha, ha, ha.. ..my bed. .."

Aware that one of the adults may be able to hear them, the girls go quiet

Further along the corridor the boys are playing "Bed Olympics". They are creatively making up the games. The one who does it the best wins. First they are jumping off the bed, jumping and doing somersaults. Sometimes they do this in the dark, sometimes with the light on.

Next they play murder in the dark. Josh goes into a corner and counts

"One, two, three. ." to twenty. The others hide. Then Josh comes out to find them.

Finally they rest.

Josh is quiet, then he says "I miss my mum "

Johnny "Last time I came here Daniel cried every night "

Steven "I did a bit at first, the very first time. Two years ago."

Johnny "Having a lot of fun means that you forget about being homesick, that's what happened to me "

Josh "How do you know Daniel cried?"

Johnny . "Everyone knew."

Steven: "It's coz it's night. At night you've got lots of time to think, in the day you have not got much time to think, have you? I think that's done on purpose. I think we're kept busy so we don't feel...especially for the first couple of days. They do the busiest things, so you keep on going and going and you stay up late, and the second night you stay up late coz you have to...and so you don't think."

Johnny : "It's at night when they can't sleep, coz like they're not doing very much. They remember that they're missing their mum and dad and they start thinking about it. Coz I remember one night Mr Brennan was waiting in our dorm for about half an hour coz Sean was crying. They should try not to think about their parents, not think about them. Just think about what they did today and having fun tomorrow."

Josh: "I liked today, but I miss my mum now."

Johnny : "I would say stop worrying about home and have fun or you'll not really have fun at all. And by the time you get home it'll be like well I..."

Steven: "The worst bit for me today was just before we got on the coach erm because my face got wet to be honest, ha, ha, ha, err..... I was crying a lot, basically because I didn't want to leave my family. Last time, you know, I was homesick, but only on the first night. When I got home, it was, like I wanted to come back his year."

Silence.

Eventually they fall asleep.

Tuesday morning, at breakfast.

Ding dong, dong ding goes the bell announcing that breakfast is ready. The children line up outside the dining room. They walk in only on Martin's say-so. All of the places have been set ready, by the group that cleared after last night's dinner. The children stand behind their seats, when directed by Martin they sit down. In small orderly groups, children walk to the breakfast bar to help themselves to cereal and fruit juices.

Later, one child from each table goes to the serving hatch to help serve the others. Warm plates are given out, platters and bowls of hot food are placed on tables. The children and staff, Rod has arrived by now, eat sausages and beans with hot toast, washed down with tea, coffee or juice.

After the clearing, Rod prepares the children for the rest of the day. "You will need wellies, waterproofs and rucksacks. We meet by the mini buses at 9.30. But first there are duties to be done. Group one you are on cleaning duty. Mr Brennan will supervise you; group two are Eco-Warriors. ."

"Hurrah!" from all of group two.

". Mr M, can you take them please?"

"Sure!", exclaims Mick.

"Mrs McDermott will supervise group three with the clearing and table setting. OK?..", he seeks confirmation from Edyta and she nods. "That leaves group four to make the packed lunches, with Mrs Hughes. Hands up for cheese spread? Ham? Marmite. . ."

"Right, let's go then!"

Some parents have sent cards and letters with Martin Brennan. He gives them out on this first morning. Steven gets a letter from his parents. He looks at it but doesn't open it. Just looking at the envelope is making him feel homesick again. Steven can't bring himself to open the envelope; he decides to leave it unopened until the evening.

In the lounge David plays Brahms on the piano. Josh is sat beside him looking at the pheasants in the garden.

Tuesday morning, cliff adventure

The children walk down the steeply descending path to the beach. Johnny and Josh walk together, with Kirsty some way towards the rear. Once down on the beach, Rod makes sure that each child has a helmet on, then they all begin to clamber under, and over boulders and rocks; sometimes through wave cut passages.

"This is what we call coasteering", explains Rod.



Figure 3 Coasteering.

Some of the children explore into a cave by the beach.

"Are there rats in there?" asks Kirsty.

"Yeah!" shout the boys.

"There aren't any rats", reassures Rod. "Go inside if you want to, it's safe".

Gingerly, Kirsty edges into the cave.

Johnny seems happy as he walks along the beach; although he is constantly falling over on the slippery rocks. At one point he falls into a rock pool and comes out soaking wet from the shoulders down. It doesn't matter when he is enjoying himself this much.

"This is great!"

Rod focuses the group's attention onto the wildlife on the beach and rocks.

Anemone, shrimps, limpets, tiny mussels, whelks, numerous seaweeds abound.

"See these little shell like animals?" asks Rod drawing attention to the China Limpets that cling onto the wet rock.

"It's really important not to pull them off or break them. That would damage or kill them", he adds.

"Why would anyone want to do that?" asks Johnny .

Then he falls into a rock pool again. Wellington boots full of water. Rucksack and sandwiches wet. But he is still smiling.

"He's not like this in school," comments Jean.

"No. Moody. Throws the toys out of the pram. Won't take risks," adds Edyta. "He's having a good day today."

Later the children are rock-pool dipping. Rod has brought along a number of laminated sheets, each with pictures of the plant and animal life that may be expected in rock pools.

Nettie uses a plastic washing up bowl to make a safe environment for anything she may catch. She places some small rocks and seaweed in the bowl and adds water. Rod then helps them to identify sea creatures and plants, using the laminated sheets.

Finally, the children are encouraged to produce beach sculptures using materials they can find on the beach.



Figure 4 Beach sculpture.

"What's that?" asks Josh.

"It's an octopus, of course," replies Kirsty.

"But it's only got seven arms, legs!"

"Can't count then, can ya?"

Tuesday afternoon, climbing walls and poles.

After lunch the group that Johnny and Josh are members of are climbing. The two boys are working together on the rock-climbing wall. Johnny is at the foot of the climbing wall, belaying Josh, the climber, using the lowering device, provided by the centre.

Josh begins to climb, very slowly, uncertain of his hand and foot holds. He gets about two metres off the ground then stops.

"I can't do it!" he calls.

Much encouragement from the group, "come on Josh!" they shout.

He makes an attempt to shift his right foot, then freezes.

"I can't do it!"

All of his weight is now on his left leg, and Josh can feel it twitching and jerking. He is really afraid now. He can feel cold on his brow as the sweat formed there, and on his hands, evaporates in the chill wind.

"I can't do it! I can't do it! I'm not doing it!"

Rod climbs to the side of him and suggests some moves.

"I can't do it!" says Josh.

"OK. You have to come down then," says Rod.

"I can't do it!" shouts Josh.

Next they move to the climbing poles. The climbing poles resemble wooden telegraph poles, with hand and foot holds all around to help the children get to the top. Each is about 10 metres high.

Kirsty is to climb first, with Josh belaying the rope and Johnny also holding the rope just in case it slips.

"When you get to the top, remember to leave a bogey up there", says Rod.

"Urrgh!"

Kirsty is excited about the idea of climbing it, even though she's not that keen on heights. Up she goes, slowly at first then quicker as she gets the hang of it. When she gets halfway up she stops.

"I want to come down! I can't get any hand or foot holds "

"Take your gloves off!" shouts Rod

Kirsty removes the gloves that Mrs Hughes had loaned her. As soon as she took the gloves off she is able to climb to the top.

"Rod, Rod, I put the bogey there!" she shouts

Then Kirsty comes down, laughing but relieved to be back on the ground.

Johnny climbs up next, but when it comes to Josh's turn, he refuses, "I'm not doing it," he says.

Tuesday night, in the dorms.

"It's 10 O'clock now so everyone off to bed", says Martin, "and remember the rule you don't go into others' rooms".

After 10 minutes Mick takes a walk along the main corridor by the boys' dorms. He stops by one of the dorms where he can hear some noise.

"Five, four, three, two, one ..."

Mick opens the door. All the lights are out. Johnny is on the top of a bedside cupboard, precariously balanced on top

"What are you? What? . Explain"

What Mick doesn't know is that further along the corridor another boy has jumped from one bunk to the other, clearing a six or seven foot gap between the high bunk beds.

It is Edyta's turn to patrol. She walks over to the dorm where Robert and three other boys are trying to get off to sleep. Robert is crying. She talks to him, reassures him. Then she returns to the lounge

"Rob was really sobbing! Almost hysterical," she tells the others.

"I'm not really surprised", chips in Martin. "Until really recently his mum has literally sat by him by his bed. Even now he's a year five she stays, not by his bed, but in the room until he goes to sleep. It won't be a surprise if he has a horrible few days".

"I had a chat with him about it," adds Mick, "I talked to him about not letting it spoil, ruin his night. He needs his sleep. And he'd seem to be alright for a bit and then..."

"He'd remember" said Edyta, "but that's a shame. That's beyond the normal bounds of children being homesick and it's his mum's attitude. It all adds to the burden, if you like. He'd have been homesick anyway. But that whole thing about being scared to sleep in the room, and what have you, that's a shame."

Wednesday, morning about their duties

Johnny, Josh and three girls are vacuum-cleaning the corridors. The girls are staring down in horror at a large spider on the wooden floor.

"I hate cockroaches", says one of them.

Having overheard this, Johnny walks quickly over.

"That's not a cockroach", he declares, "It's a spider". He brings the ball of his right foot down and grinds it back and forth, stubbing out the spider. "There!"

Wednesday, morning in the sea

The children find it very difficult to manage kit so equipment gets mixed up, not on the right peg. Much time is wasted sorting out these mix-ups, but eventually the children are sat in the mini-bus ready for the drive to the coast. Mick notices that Josh does not have any socks on.

"Off you go find some", he orders Josh.

"Who else hasn't got socks on?"

Four hands go up.

"Go and get some socks!"

On the beach the children put on their wet suits. Tom finds it difficult to get his wet suit on and off, not the easiest of tasks for anybody unused to doing it. Steven has got his mixed up with somebody else and now has a wet suit that is far, far too small for him. It simply will not go on, and he has to sit in the bus and watch the others. Whoever has the oversize suit is managing to use it.

Rod is in the water with Josh and Kirsty. Though all of them are clothed in wet suits, some of the children think they have never been this cold before, ever.

Rod half walks and half swims out to waist deep with one youngster at a time on the surf-board, the other giving encouragement.

Kirsty goes first. Rod pushes her off and she tries to get to her feet. Off she tumbles, and into the water she plunges.

Struggling for breath, Kirsty gets to her feet, "I was upside down!" she shouts.

After two or three more attempts, a push into the wave and Kirsty gets up to her knees on the board.

Josh is next, but makes little attempt to stand up. He is content to lie on the board as it slides into the beach.

On her next attempt Kirsty gets to her feet.

"I can't do it", says Josh.

"Let me take you out for another go", Rod suggests.

"No. Can't do it!" he replies.

"Come on Josh," says Kirsty.

"I'm cold. I'm going back!"

Wednesday evening, at dinner

"Johnny's flicking food around, Mr Brennan," says Nettie.

"I'll go," says Edyta.

She comes back with Johnny, "he not only threw food around their table, but he's been very rude to me," she tells the adult table.

Johnny is moved to a separate table and sits alone. He misses dessert. Then he is sat alone in the staff-room. There, he writes a postcard to his family: -

Dear Mum and Dad,

It is really bad here I don't like it. The door does not get locked at night. A mad-man could get in and murder us.

I miss you and I want to come home.

John.

Figure 5 Johnny's postcard.

Wednesday night, the lambing shed

A trip has been arranged to a local farm to see inside the lambing shed. The children are excited as they walk to the farm. The sun is beginning to set and they know that walking back along the narrow path across the Moor, one behind the other, they will be in almost total darkness. For now, however, the farm visit occupies their thoughts. What will it be like?

Martin has simply told them that they are going to see the lambing shed. Rod only says, "You'll have to wait and see".

As they enter the yard Martin and Rod shake hands with the farmer and quickly they go inside the shed. It is huge! Two hundred bleating sheep are penned along the far side of the shed, crammed together waiting to give birth. The noise is deafening and

there is an indescribable smell: a mixture of hay, blood, disinfectant, sheep faeces and urine.

"What a stink!", shouts Josh.

The farmer somehow manages to keep an eye on his sheep, watching for those that seem ready, then frantically bringing them out of the large pen. Closer to the children are individual ewes that have been penned off by the farmer as they are about to lamb.

"Look", cries Johnny, "this one's having its baby now."

The other children crowd round. Martin looks over their shoulders. Rod prefers to look away.

After a struggle the lamb is born and the children watch enthralled as it tries to get to its feet. Two boys are mesmerised as the ewe, tired after her efforts, looks at the afterbirth.

"That's the yolk", declares Josh, pointing at the bloody afterbirth.

"Mr Brennan!" shouts Steven, "I actually saw a lamb just come out. It just like, popped and came out. It like just came out of thin air!"

Cameras are clicking furiously as the children are busily taking photographs.

The farmer comes around with an antiseptic to put onto the wound where the umbilical cord had attached to the lamb. He picks up another lamb and lets the children hold it if they want to; not for too long, as the mother may yet reject it. In the corner behind them are a ewe and two lambs that didn't survive the birth. The children don't notice this at first, but later a few will.

There is a lot for Martin and his staff to follow up back at school.

As the group walk back to the centre Martin is talking to Rod.

"You know, it's this they will remember. Not the end-of-key stage tests or the literacy hour. The children come back to visit us years after they have left the school, and it's their visit to the centre that they want to talk about," he says.

"I'll bet there have been some big changes, I've only worked here two years."

Martin ponders. "The residential aspects have changed most. What the children were doing when we began bringing them here, they were expected to do the washing up, most of the cleaning throughout the centre. But now 'health and safety' has restricted that quite severely. As you know, Rod, now children are not allowed in the kitchen. The quality of the clothing that's provided, the protective clothing has improved out of all proportion. Its unrecognisable now, it was fairly primitive when we first started. Most children still brought their own wellies and waterproofs, if they brought waterproofs at all.... But the coats, they were more like oilskins. The opportunities to travel have improved with the three mini buses, but they've shortened the distances considerably.

As they near the centre after a forty minute walk across the moor in almost complete darkness, Rod turns back to look at the children, "one of the things I have noticed is how they respond to darkness", he observes.

"Yes. Now that's always the source of some excitement. Let's get them to stop here and look down that valley."

The children sit down. All they can see is a twinkle of lights way out on the hills, a solitary light down below them in a house. Nothing else.

After a while they walk on.

"It really does inspire," says Martin

Wednesday night, in the lounge

Edyta is reading through the postcards that children have written to send home. At first she is interested in some of the misspellings on the cards.

"David jumped off the cupboard. " she spells out the word, "C-U-B-E-R-D what kind of spelling is that?"

They all laugh

Then Edyta happens upon that post card Johnny wrote earlier

She reads aloud to the others, "It is really bad here I don't like it. The door does not get locked at night. A mad-man could get in and murder us"

"Are we going to send that one?" asks Mick

"Look at this!" says Edyta, reading another postcard.

"Listen to what Steven has written here to his parents, "I've got six layers on, I'm still freezing, everyone hates me. I miss you and I want to come home", we can't let him send that!"

"His parents will be devastated!" says Mick.

Martin agrees that some postcards will not be sent, "if any questions are asked", he adds, "leave it to me to explain "

Thursday morning at breakfast

The girls are eating their sausages and waffles. "Last night" says Nettie, "we turned the lights off straight away and turned on our torches and started talking about things. But it's really freaky".

"Why?" asks Kirsty.

"The tap kept going on and off and it wasn't even..."

Johnny shouts across from the next table, "coz she thinks they have a ghost in there!"

"Kirsty," whispers Nettie, "there is definitely a ghost in my room, I ran out screaming one morning, there was a ghost, well something was touching my ear and like breathing on my neck or something".

"I think in our dorm it was our fear," decides Kirsty, "because we started talking about our bad dreams and horror movies and things. I don't think there are ghosts."

Thursday, beach survival

Johnny sings as he walks along the lane by Holly Farm. On the way children collect fire wood. As the underfoot conditions change, and the walk turns into a muddy scramble, Josh slips and falls over a great deal. Then the going gets tougher as the group slip and slide down through the rhododendrons. It is a lengthy scramble through bushes and over loose scree and mud down towards the secluded beach.

Now, everybody is finding it difficult to keep on their feet. Josh is dripping with sweat and is struggling to walk using his hands."

"I can't do it!" shouts Josh. "Can't do it!"

At first Johnny helps, but as he finds it increasingly difficult to keep his own balance he cannot carry on looking out for the smaller Josh.

"I can't do it!"

"Course you can fucking do it!" calls out Johnny.

Rod has heard this and rounds on Johnny.

"Language! We're not having that," he says. "When we are down on the beach I want a word with you. You'll have to sit out the activity there."

Moody and sullen Johnny walks on in silence. He refuses to collect tinder or wood for the fire. His sulking does not seem to affect the group.

While most of the children are busily building a shelter on the beach, Johnny sits out as punishment for swearing.

The group – Johnny now included – is seated on the beach. Rod shows them how to make fires, starting with tinder, then twigs, leading to larger pieces of wood. In groups of three the children prepare fires. Rod produces some matches and half a piece of paper for the groups to use. They take it in turns to light fires and see if the fires keep going. Few of them do, perhaps because of the damp. Rod then demonstrates ways of lighting a fire without matches. One way is to strike two pieces of metal together to make sparks onto 'Duraglit' wadding.

"Now, everyone has to find a stick with a pointed tip," says Rod. "Then you can stick a marshmallow on the end and hold it over the fire until it turns golden brown."

When all the fires were going the children toasted marshmallows on sticks.

"These taste absolutely lovely", declares Kirsty, "its crusty on the outside and all soft and sticky on the inside!"

Nettie was cooking a marshmallow on the biggest fire of them all when she tripped over. The other children thought this hilarious. Everyone laughed and tried to help her up. Kirsty got the marshmallow on the stick and threw it into the fire.

Eager hands break open sandwich boxes and hungrily the children begin to eat.

Except one.

"I can't do it!" says Josh.

"Can't do what?" someone asks.

"I can't eat because my hands are dirty."

"Loser."

On the way back Johnny is larking around with Josh and Steven. He falls over on purpose and he gradually falls to the back of the group with a few others.

"When the fire heats up the sea", Johnny says "it will explode and blow up the planets. It will blow up the planets Venus, and Mars and Kirsty."

Kirsty ignores this. Pretend deafness is an effective form of self defence.

Rod's plan is to walk the group back up the slope to the centre, following a stream for some of the route. He can only do this when the stream is not in spate, but today the water runs moderately. The day is dry and fine, as is the weather forecast.

They walk up a stream bed, the water is not running deeply, but it gets into their boots. The children slip and slide.

Once back in the centre grounds, Rod begins a debriefing session with the children. He decides to focus on the learning goal 'caring and sharing'.

"Give me some examples of when you cared for somebody today? When did somebody care for you?"

Some children are keen to answer...Johnny looks on.

"Tell me when you did that today? When did you care for somebody?" asks Rod,

Thursday afternoon, team games

Rod explains the Business Game.

"You will be in teams. Each team is a business and you compete with each other. You begin with a pot of money. Each team gets the same amount; £100. Now, each separate activity is a problem solving 'game'. Things like the problem wall, tyres, spaghetti tangle, zip wire "

"Wow, do we get to go on the zip wire?" asks Johnny

". yes, and blow the whistle, sheep and shepherd, skiing, and others. Money is earned for successful completing. But there is not time to do them all, so you have to choose. And you have to pay to do the problem. that's like an investment in business. The hard ones cost more to enter, but your team gets more money if it completes a hard task. Look," he points to a board, "this shows what you can do, how much it will cost you to have a go and how much you win if you complete it successfully "

Kirsty's group decides to try the Spaghetti Tangle first. This is an obstacle course completed by the group who are led around by an adult. All members of the group are attached to a rope and are blindfolded. The main focus is to encourage communication and mutual help and support.

The girls are doing quite well and finding the experience very amusing. Kirsty shouts out, "stop, slow down, I'm stuck in a tyre and I've got a wedgie!"

All the other girls laugh at this

"And my trousers are coming off!" shouts Nettie

The team that Josh and Johnny are in reach the Problem Wall. The wall is about eight feet high and vertical.

"Right" says Rod, "how will you manage this one?"

Johnny immediately takes a lead, "It's easy. You lot lift me and Josh up first then we can help you all up".

He looks at the others. "You," he says, pointing at Steven, "you can push them up to me."



Figure 6 The Problem Wall.

Johnny goes first, the other children making a kind of pyramid to help him, with the big, strong Steven providing the foundation. Together, they lift Johnny high enough so that he can gain a grip on the top of the wall and lift himself. He gets his right leg over the wall and is up.

"Come on Josh, same way", he commands.

Josh is not as tall as Johnny, but with a lift from Steven and with help from Johnny above him, he makes it easily enough.

The next three get up quickly, Steven provides the hands and shoulders they need to get half way, to where Johnny and Josh can reach down and help them. So far things have gone well, but try as he might Steven, left until last, cannot reach up high enough to grab hold of the hands offered to him.

"Jump!" they urge, but it's no use. Steven is tall, but he is also heavy. He just cannot get up.

"Sorry," he says, "there's no chuffin' way I'm going to get up there!"

"So, what went well?" Rod asks the dejected looking team.

"We was rubbish," says Johnny.

"Sorry," says Steven, quietly.

"Not your fault, Steve, we should have got you up in the middle of us. Johnny, you'd be best off as the last one. You can help push as good as Steve, but maybe you can run and jump and we can catch you." It is David, reserved and quiet until now, who makes these suggestions.

"Rod," asks Johnny, "can we have another go? Please?"

Rod looks at his watch. "Mmm, OK." He says, but first, think about David's plan. Try to link it with your experience. The first one can be lifted and pushed up fairly easily. Who should that be?"

"Steven," suggests Johnny.

"No, he's too fat...too big," says Josh. "Why not let David go first?"

"Once at the top," carries on Rod, "the platform on the back of the wall means those who are up can help pull others. So, for those in the middle it is quite easy to be both lifted and pulled.

"That's when we get Steve up," says David, "when there are two pushing and two pulling. Can you do that Steven?"

"Yeah, and I can push the first two up".

"The major problem," says Rod, "is the last one of you. The person selected for this job needs to be tall and athletic because they will need to be able to jump and reach up to the arms dangled to help them.

"OK, I can do that," Johnny assures them.

"Off you go then".

Armed with this new plan the team get going quickly. Steven and Johnny lift first David and then Josh to the top of the wall. Next, Johnny and the other two boys struggle, but manage to lift Steven and with David and Josh's help he is up. Last is Johnny. Steven and David lie on the wall to let their arms dangle down as far as possible. Johnny is standing still, and he tries to jump up. Once, twice. No, he can't get enough lift.

David shouts down to him, "take a run up. Go back there and run at it."

Johnny does as he is told, he runs, leaps and almost reaches David's hand.

Back he goes and this time he catches hold, his feet gain purchase on the wooden wall face, he lunges his other arm upward and Steven grabs hold. He is up. A loud cheer rises from all the team.

Another debrief session follows.

"We got everyone over this time," says Johnny.

"Yes you did, eventually. Think about how you did that. Who was giving out orders? David was a leader. He thought about things and told some of you what to do. How could you improve?"

Steven "Well. We could have talked about it first time, before you lot all got up and left me. We should have listened to David from the start."

"But David didn't flipping say anything", says Johnny.

"Did he get chance?" asks Rod.

"No. . . . Sometimes it's the quiet people who have the good ideas," puts in Josh, "I'll always remember that".

Thursday night, shop and talent show

Rod supervises the Wild Country Hall shop, where gifts and souvenirs may be purchased. Beanie hats, sweatshirts, tee shirts and scarves. Trinkets and gifts to take home, mugs emblazoned with the Wild Country Hall logo. The dark green sweatshirts have a relatively discrete Wild Country Hall logo embroidered on the chest, left side.

"Those of you in year six", announces Martin, "can wear a Wild Country Hall sweatshirt in place of your uniform sweatshirt once we get back. It's a real privilege and shows you have experienced Wild Country Hall."

The tee shirts, available in a variety of colours are more brazen; along with the same logo on the front, they have emblazoned on the backs, in a contrastingly coloured box and with large sized lettering -

THE WILD COUNTRY HALL EXPERIENCE!

Later the children take part in a talent show in the lounge.

Kirsty does a dance, rather like a Bavarian in leder hosen, clapping and slapping her sides.

David plays Brahms.

Johnny and Josh do a rap.

Steven tells a joke or two.

Thursday night, the adults are in the lounge relaxing

As they sit in the lounge, the adults enjoy a glass of wine and chat about the day's experiences. Eventually, Edyta asks Martin Brennan why he brings children to Wild Country Hall year after year.

"What would you say they get out of it?" she asks.

"Well, I believe one of the major benefits is the residential experience. Getting out, living together as a group and being away from home. Learning independence. Learning some self sufficiency skills, particularly in the case of some children who have been waited on hand and foot all their lives. What it's like to share with other people. Learning to accept that other people have rights, and that priorities may sometimes be given to others rather than themselves. Getting them out into the great outdoors. I can't explain just how important I believe that is. It's about experiencing challenges which frighten them, but that they are able to get over, see the other side of this, experience the real thrill of doing something that created a sense of danger, things which I don't think we can offer enough of just by doing things in school."

There is a silence...

"There's also something about the location...did you know", continues Martin, "did you know that Doug Cooper, he left our school in the mid 90s, Doug brought his girlfriend here...here to Wild Country Hall, and that down there" he points towards the sea, "down on that beach he proposed to her? Did any of you know that? That just shows how important this place is to some of the people who come here".

Friday morning, canoeing.

Using wooden beams and ropes, the children have to fasten together two canoes.



Figure 7 Canoes on the lake.

Then they take turns at being captain, expected to manage the movement of the vessel, steering it around a lake in the hunt for clues to the treasure.

Pete Bromley is in one boat with Mick and a number of children.

"Steven, get up," shouts Pete, "read out the clue and take us to the treasure."

Steven was unsure, but all of the other children were encouraging him, "go on Steve! You can do it".

"No I can't," shouted Steven, but with a few mistakes, he manages to steer the boat to the next clue.

"Right, you've got to be captain next Kirsty", said Pete.

Kirsty froze. She didn't know what to do.

"Alright then," she says in a low, meek voice.

"You can take advice from someone else in the group," suggested Pete.

One of the children shouted out "why don't you get everyone on this side to paddle and we'll turn round..."

"Do you want them to help you?" asked Pete.

"Yeah."

So, with a bit of advice and encouragement from the rest of the group, Kirsty is able to steer the canoes around the lake.

Eventually all the canoes are back on the lakeside and the session ends with one big water-fight.

Friday, after lunch. The final debrief session

With a PowerPoint slide behind him, Pete asks the children what they have learnt.

Many hands go up...

Steven "How to pack the sack!"

Kirsty "I learned how to make a better future, by reducing, reusing and recycling."

Johnny "I've learned to be a social being, smile and the world smiles with you!"

Nettie "Caring and sharing, it's less about me and more about we."

Josh "Adventure for life: I can!"

Friday afternoon handing back kit

There is a cold, drizzle laden sky over Wild Country Hall as the children wait in line to hand back their waterproof kit and rucksacks

Kirsty stands last in the queue and, as Rod had missed her 'turn' in last night's talent show, he asks her to tell him about it. At once Kirsty breaks into a clapping, dancing, chanting routine learnt, she tells Rod, at Girl Guides

"So, what's been the best part of Wild Country Hall, Kirsty?"

"Staying away from my mum and dad," she replied.

"Did you like that?"

"No. But I know I can do it I'm not scared of the sea now, either I just smiled when I swallowed a bit of the water."

"Anything else?" Rod asks

She thought for a while She glanced at Johnny and Josh

"I put my hand up more I've not been such a scaredy cat!"

Friday late, on the bus home

Mick is singing, *"there was an old woman and she lived in the woods . "*

and the children join in the chorus, *"willya, willya, wall-ya"*

"There was an old woman and she lived in the woods "

" down by the river Saw-ya."

"She had a baby six months old "

"How is he able to get them all to join in?" Jean asks Edyta.

"She had a pen-knife long and sharp " Mick emphasises the word 'sharp' so that it becomes 'shaaaarrrp'

"Willya, willya, wall-ya"

"He couldn't get them singing on the way," adds Martin, "maybe they were too worried? Well, they don't seem worried now."

"He pulled the rope and she got hung!...willya, willya, wall-ya...and that was the end of the woman in the woods, willya, willya, wall-ya..."and that was the end of the baby too...down by the river Saw-ya."

5.2 A discussion of children's learning viewed through the lens of discursive positioning.

I have grouped my 'findings' into four themes:-

- First, [5.2.1] I introduce the need to consider learning as discursive positioning by drawing attention to complexities in my data that are not addressed by other perspectives on learning.
- Next, in part 5.2 2, I examine those distinct discourses I found evidence of in the experiences at the centre and offer an explanation of how these make significant contributions to learning as identity. I also consider power in relation to these discourses
- Then, [5 2 3] I discuss how discursive positioning may be a useful addition to the literature on outdoor learning
- Finally, in 5 2 4, I consider how neo-Liberalism and performativity discourses may have affected the organisation of learning and the pedagogic practices at Wild Country Hall, and how they may be may forcing the centre to function in a similar way to schools

In order to illustrate these issues I use a number of examples from the story of Wild Country Hall and my data. When using examples from the story I have retained the names of the characters featuring there. In order to maintain the anonymity of respondents, when citing examples from the data I have used the notation M and F to indicate male and female child participants, followed by a letter which corresponds to the first letter of the respondents name (thus, MJ, FK, etc.) Sometimes, however, in the interview data, children have named each other and so as not to interrupt the flow of what they say I have substituted pseudonyms for children's real names. As all the children were of a very similar age (between nine and 11 years), I have not

indicated the ages of individual respondents. Otherwise I have attributed data to a Head Teacher, a parent helper, etc. I have included the date of the interview, where appropriate, together with a page reference from the relevant interview transcripts.

5.2.1 Initial problems posed by the data.

In Chapter 2 I discussed a number of perspectives on learning that seem to have dominated practice and research in outdoor learning. Mostly these are traditional perspectives; acquisition - of knowledge, skills and enhanced self-concept - often within a Kolbian (Kolb, 1984) model of experiential learning. More recently, however, socio-cultural perspectives featuring participation models have also featured in the literature, particularly in the work of Brown (2009, 2010), McCulloch (2002, 2007) and Seaman (2007). I have found, and discussed above, limitations in all of these perspectives. Therefore, I have used the lens of discursive positioning (Davies, 1990, 2004; Davies and Harré, 1990) to understand learning reported in my data. Before turning to use discursive positioning to consider data, I wish to exemplify some drawbacks of using acquisitional and socio-cultural perspectives with my data.

In that acquisitional lenses on learning can be considered 'common sense' (Hager and Hodkinson, 2009) it is perhaps no surprise that, generally, my participants when asked questions about learning chose to respond as though learning were, by nature, acquisitional. However, I found that adults were, on the whole, much more pre-disposed to talk about learning as acquisition, especially the acquisition of 'life skills', than were the children. For example,

"I think, say with the likes of Jason, he is definitely growing in confidence, and I'm not sure how much you can attribute to going to Wild Country Hall and how much is his age, but he's definitely come on. I'm sure that is because he's not academic and I think so much is placed on academic achievement that for someone like Jason, who ran the fastest and climbed the highest and all that other stuff it's given him a confidence. For people like that I think it is

lasting. It is Whereas perhaps the ones like Duncan and Nell who are quite capable and confident anyway I think it can add a dimension but I don't think it has got value, but a different kind of value I think than for someone like Jason,"

(Interview with female classroom assistant, July 2005 p.4).

The classroom assistant is clearly identifying 'Jason's' learning with the acquisition, or development, of enhanced self-confidence (Gibbs and Bunyan, 1997, Swarbrick, *et al.*, 2007) which she thinks will have a lasting effect (Dierking and Falk, 1997, Hattie, *et al.*, 1998, Telford, 2010). Adults often used the language of acquisition and development to articulate the kinds of gains they observed. For example, in the following extract an adult is speaking about one girl in particular.-

".. but at least you see another side of them, a side that's there and, hopefully eventually will come out as she builds up more confidence."

(Interview with male parent/helper, July 2005 p 3)

Children, even when asked specifically about learning - which my semi-structured interview approach tended to avoid - were more inclined to speak diversely about changes they perceived, or others reported in them. The following extract from the group interviews illustrates some of the complexity within these discussions:-

Tony "what do you think you learned at Wild Country Hall?"

MK "how to be a team, how to co-operate, things like that."

FS "we learned new skills "

Tony "Like?"

FF "Packing the sac "

FS "yeah and like ???? canoes and things like that much more than work "

MS "I learnt a funny joke "

Tony "tell me, tell me what packing the sac is FF "

FF "it's when you're taking new skills that you've learnt back with you . "

Tony "can you tell me some?"

FF ".. erm, if you've done canoeing you're taking, well if you learned how to canoe properly, then when you go back, like, you can carry on like. . "

FS "yeah, but there is nowhere to carry on canoeing."

Tony "...so let's think about it a bit more widely. Is it just about doing exactly what we did there, bringing it back and doing it again?"

All, mixed "No, but...it could... it'll give us ideas to do...yeah, but we could..."

FS "We can make erm, not do exactly the same things but, erm...like kinda use it to help you..."

Tony "like? What? What like?"

MK "bringing back skills that we can use in other stuff here."

Tony "Like?"

MK "...maybe in PE or something; I don't know?"

FS It's like taking what you did there and remembering what you did there.

Tony "when you said skills, that's a good word, but what do you think that means?"

FS "erm things that you are able to do?"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.8-9).

My initial question "what do you think you learned at Wild Country Hall?" was very similar in style to that asked by Pete in the final debrief session after lunch on Friday. It was intended as an opening question to direct the children's talk onto learning. Their initial answers tended to focus on the rhetoric of the learning goals they had encountered at the centre; how to be a team, how to co-operate, new skills, packing the sac.

When pressed, FF relates her learning to transfer; "It's when you're taking new skills that you've learnt back with you". When pressed further, to give an example, FF suggests that the canoeing, paddling skills acquired at the centre may be used back at home. But she is immediately challenged by FS who acknowledges the highly situated nature of knowledge gained at Wild Country Hall when she points out that "There is nowhere to carry on canoeing". This foregrounds a major issue in the application of acquisitional perspectives in my research, the situated nature of knowledge and specific skills, discussed above (2.2.1). Acquiring the knowledge and skills associated with paddling a canoe are only useful to paddlers.

When encouraged to think more deeply about this issue, participants still tried to relate skills they had encountered at Wild Country Hall to similar situations such as PE, "Bringing back skills that we can use in other stuff here maybe in PE or something; I don't know?" They were trying to address the transfer problem discussed above (Chapter 2), but were not coming close to solving it

This issue, the problematic nature of the concept of transferring either knowledge or skills supposedly acquired at the centre back to home or school, was one of the reasons I turned to discursive positioning as a useful lens through which to consider the learning at Wild Country Hall

It was often difficult for participants, adults and children, to articulate their perceptions of learning during the Wild Country Hall experience. Consider, for example, how an adult helper struggles and stutters to try to form an adequate explanation.-

" . it's nice to see the ones who are good excel, but it's even better when that, you know, who don't think they can do it, do. I actually enjoy, I do enjoy working with this age group because I find they're quite erm . I do enjoy it, it's erm I enjoy working with this age group I think they're really, I don't know, they're just starting to become themselves or whatever and I think it's good to see the, the feistiness in them and the . It's weird.. "

(Interview with adult parent/helper, July 2005 p. 3).

I suggest this struggle with articulation may be explained by the absence of adequate vocabulary. I am not suggesting that the parent helper who visited Wild Country Hall with pupils from Small School, and who I later interviewed, was illiterate. On the contrary, he displayed many of the characteristics of a well educated and articulate person. Rather, that the 'common sense' (Hager and Hodkinson,

2009) vocabulary that accompanies learning as acquisition and transfer proves to be of little or no use when trying to explain the learning experiences of children who had been to Wild Country Hall. When participants began to consider learning in terms of changes in individuals, the acquisitional vocabulary, its tropes and metaphors, became redundant.

There are also drawbacks in using the socio-cultural, participation model with my data. For example, one parent helper recounted the story of a girl who, he claimed, had changed from a somewhat shy girl to one who would join in friendly banter with him,

"...she really came out of herself. [At school] she spends all of her time with her head down and she looks at you through a fringe. Down there she was lipping me back, joining in, taking the Mickey. Come back and I was joking with her and, no, she didn't like [it], she just went back into a shell,"

(Interview with male parent/helper, July 2005 p.3).

Participation models are useful in explaining this reported behaviour. The girl is shy and diffident in school, a particular community of practice in which her diffidence is accepted as legitimate. In a new community of practice (Wenger, 1998) at Wild Country Hall, her behaviour is reshaped. There she participates in quite different cultural practices; 'lipping' back the adult helper (who, I emphasise, is not a teacher) joining in the banter, taking the Mickey. Later, when returning to school, she adopts her former practices which are perfectly legitimate in the community of the school; head down, presumably working, and in her 'shell'.

Participation models do not, however, fully explain other reported changes in behaviour or disposition, for example, the boy who rejects his Game Boy in favour of more social activities, the girl who unwittingly helps more around the house, those who are reportedly more confident. All of these examples are discussed fully in Chapter 5, part 2.3. Before this discussion, however, I wish to introduce readers to the distinctive discursive practices of the centre.

I suggest that the conceptualisation of learning as the discursive positioning of individual identity may be more useful than the other learning lenses proposed by Hager and Hodgkinson (2009), the propositional learning lens, the skill learning lens and learning through participation in human practices lens, to arrive at an adequate explanation for children's learning experiences at Wild Country Hall. It demands, however, the use of a different vocabulary, a different language. It also demands that the discursive practices of the centre have been established, which is the business of the following section.

5.2.2 The distinctive discourses of Wild Country Hall.

In order for my thesis - that learning at Wild Country Hall may be more usefully seen from a socio cultural perspective of the discursive positioning of individual identity to stand, I need to show what distinctive discursive practices are available to participants at the centre. My analysis of the data established the following discourses -

- The discourse of place; the "great outdoors" and associated discourses of awe and wonder, environmental appreciation, conservation and sustainability
- The discourse of rites of passage, facing and over-coming fears. These include encountering and coping with homesickness, living with new people,

encountering strange customs and unfamiliar social practices along with confronting fears (for example, of heights or water).

- Discourses of confidence building, within a neo-Hahnian framework of setting up challenges and encouraging calculated risk taking to overcome them, all of which can be seen as investment in children; including which encourages personal independence, from parents or teachers.

Place: the “great outdoors”.



Figure 8 Wild Country Hall buildings.

In this section I will discuss place framed in terms of the “great outdoors” and associated discourses of awe and wonder, environmental appreciation, conservation and sustainability. There is no indication in my data to contradict the view that children are spending less time outdoors than previous generations of children may have done (Kahn and Kellert, 2002; Muñoz, 2009); there is nothing to suggest that

contact with Wild Country Hall makes children more likely to look to the outdoors for their leisure. A study over a longer time, such as that undertaken by Telford (2010), might illuminate this issue.

Both the literature and my data suggest that some children find outdoor centres and their surroundings lastingly important places. Telford (2010) claims that participation at the Ardentinnny centre brought about a love of the outdoor environment in some of his respondents. Similar sentiments have been reported to me. For example:-

“...one of my pupils brought his girlfriend here... and proposed to her down there on that beach,”

(Notes of a conversation with teacher, April 2006).

This may have been because the young man referred to in this extract thought the beach and its surroundings a particularly beautiful and fitting place for a romantic proposal of marriage, or it may have been because of a constructed, sentimental attachment formed with the place. It is an extreme example of place affecting an individual.

My interviews with teachers indicate that they have a strong belief in the influence that place may have:-

“Getting out into the great outdoors. I can’t explain just how much I think that is important, even to children like these who live in the heart of the country, who rarely set foot outside their houses at home... There’s also something about the location...the English coast ...the environment we were in which is actually quite lonely, quite isolated...”

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008, p.5).

To contextualise this statement, it is important to be mindful that this Head Teacher had taken children to Wild Country Hall for eighteen years. When he talks of place,

and "getting out into the great outdoors," he does not mean any outdoor space, he means this centre. Anyshire has three other centres, any of which might have been used as an alternative venue, but this Head Teacher chooses to return to Wild Country Hall, as do the organisers of outdoor learning at Hilly Edge and Suburbia Row schools.

As outlined in Chapter 2, a number of writers have associated the outdoors with spirituality, and especially promoting a sense of awe and wonder (e.g. Hitzhusen, 2004; Paffard, 1973; Rea, 2003). This association is supported by both the adults and children who took part in my research; for example,

"When you think someone's got the message here, little things that make it special that you can't do anywhere else. We've taken them lambing for a few years and its always comes as a shock to me to find so many of them who've been to this school, who know about the country ways, who've perhaps seen lambing before, but who still find it such an exciting adventure,"

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008, p. 6).

The children were especially keen and enthusiastic to talk about their reactions to outdoor places and the phenomena they encountered. The lambing barn was a very strong example of this:-

"I actually saw a lamb just come out, it just like..popped! and came out, it like just came out of thin air,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p. 27).

Such reactions may be interpreted as awe and wonder (Meehan, 2002; Webster, 1982). Paffard (1973) suggests that what he calls 'transcendental experiences' may be more likely to occur at night. The special nature of darkness was evidenced in my data:-

"When we went to Wild Country Hall we went on a night walk up on the moors. It was really fun because we had to walk through all of this heather and it was really dark",

(Child's writing).

"One of the best nights we've had up on the moor, when we were coming back and realised the sun was just about to disappear and we made them just sit down in the heather and watch. There was total silence, absolute total silence even after the sun had disappeared. We talk about inspiring awe and wonder, that really was one of those moments,"

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008, p 6)

Wild Country Hall is an Eco-centre (Eco-schools, 2008). The discourse of environmental conservation is very strongly fore-grounded in the centre. Attempts are made to reduce the amount of fossil fuel it uses. A wind generator has been installed, it is sited behind the furthest building in Figure 8. Water use is monitored and reduction encouraged by all centre users, particularly through the competition between schools which is explained in my data-rich story of Wild Country Hall. Food is sourced as locally as possible and wall charts are on display with details of food miles involved. The local area is utilised by driving children around in mini-buses, but there is evidence that this has reduced over the years -

"The opportunities to travel have improved with the three mini-buses, but they've shortened the distances considerably. They're a bit more conscious of the amount of petrol they consume so they look for opportunities closer to home. So they've cut down on the travel. Much less extravagant. Climbing tends to be in grounds now."

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008, p.1)

Care for the natural environment is also encouraged:-

"...instructors down there who spend time explaining what the environment is, how it's been shaped, what the different features are, what animal might have caused this,"

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008, p.2).

During my visits to the centre, visiting speakers in the evenings have included a member of the Moorland Zoo who brought and talked about various small animals, and a local conservationist who brought a Barn Owl and other birds to show to the children. When considering learning as discursive positioning there is evidence in my data that 'place' and the associated discourses of awe and wonder (Meehan, 2002; Webster, 1982), environmental appreciation, conservation and sustainability (Ewert, 2004) figure very powerfully in the culture of Wild Country Hall and may play an important part in the process of identity formation (Davies, 1990, 2004; Davies and Harré, 1990) and these are discussed in part 5.2.3.

Rites of passage.

During my interviews a number of 'private' concerns of children emerged, all of which can be associated with the residential context of their Wild Country experience. I have chosen to write about these as a discourse of Rites of Passage. In so doing I make a comparison with initiation rites observed in many primitive societies and some secret organisations (van Gennep, 1909/1960). Van Gennep makes a clear distinction between physiological and social puberty (1909/1960, p. 65) and it is his conceptualisation of 'social puberty' I engage with here. Contextualised at Wild Country Hall, these include facing and over-coming fears (heights, water, ghosts) living with new people, encountering strange customs and unfamiliar social practices, and especially encountering and coping with homesickness. The classic

narrative of any initiation rite follows three distinct phases. First the novice goes away from their home, second they spend time with 'experts', older members of the community who are familiar with the social practices the novice needs to encounter. Following this they are asked to prove themselves in some way. Finally, the novice returns bearing some mark to symbolise their newly-won maturity, which, in traditional initiation rites, usually involve cutting and piercing (van Gennep, 1909/1960). These three features may be observed in the Wild Country Hall experience:-

1 The Novice is removed from home and family:-

The driver revs the engine and the coach slowly moves away. Mums, dads, children and teachers wave. They're off at last,

(Extract from the data rich narrative).

This part of the story *Wild Country Hall: A week in the life of a residential outdoor education centre* provides a vivid account of the removal of the children from their school environment and from their parents, an essential feature in a rite of passage. It can be a somewhat painful experience for children, parents or both.

2 The Novice is attended by social experts:-

Kirsty is to climb first, with Josh belaying the rope and Johnny also holding the rope just in case it slipped. "When you get to the top, remember to leave a bogey up there", says Rod. "Urrgh!" Kirsty was excited about the idea of climbing it, even though she's not that keen on heights. Up she goes, slowly at first then quicker as she gets the hang of it. When she gets halfway up she stops. "I want to come down! I can't get any hand or foot holds." "Take your gloves off!" shouts Rod. Kirsty removes the gloves that Mrs Hughes had loaned her. As soon as she took the gloves off she is able to climb to the top. "I put the bogey there, Rod" she shouts. Then Kirsty comes down, laughing but relieved to be back on the ground,

(Extract from the data rich narrative)

Kirsty's climb up the pole is closely based on the writing of a child. Here she can be seen to be 'in the bush' being guided by 'Rod' who represents an elder, one skilled in the social practices she is to be initiated in. Rod provides Kirsty with both guidance in some of the secret practices of the centre "When you get to the top, remember to leave a bogey up there," and with advice on how to succeed when she is faltering, "I want to come down! I can't get any hand or foot holds." "Take your gloves off!" shouts Rod.

Other examples of the support of 'elders', or other experts, is common in my data:-

"...they know [teacher] is always round the corner. They know that we're here. They've known us for a long time. We have both been used to sitting with a foot in the door of a dormitory reading a book while a child is being reassured that we are still there,"

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008, p.3).

"I remember saying to them that there's nothing wrong with being homesick. It's actually completely normal. It's how you deal with it and how you get over that. I said to her, "I expect your mum and dad are at home thinking about you and thinking you're having a fantastic time and so you should think good things about them not lying here wasting your time being upset". But, I told her, don't think there is anything wrong with you for being homesick,"

(Interview with classroom assistant, July 2005 p.5).

These can be seen as examples of elders initiating the novice into adult practices. They provide a supportive environment and sound advice, "don't think there is anything wrong with you for being homesick". Sometimes initiation is provided by children who are themselves experts in the initiation processes or practices. For example, commenting on Darren's (pseudonym) tendency to introversion, one boy articulated the expertise he himself used in trying to re-direct Darren's behaviour:-

" .Darren decided to read his book the whole way through .I kind of persuaded him to play cuddly toy cricket, which is a really good game "

(Group interview, May 2006 pp 11-12).

The key function that rites of passage play is in enabling novices to prove themselves This is accomplished at Wild Country Hall by overcoming challenges. Some of these are planned (e g the problem wall, the rock climbing, the canoeing and surfing) whilst others are embedded within the residential aspects of the centre.

3 The Novice returns bearing some symbol of maturity:-

Rod supervises the Wild Country Hall shop, where gifts and souvenirs may be purchased Beanie hats, sweatshirts, tee shirts and scarves. Trinkets and gifts to take home, mugs emblazoned with the Wild Country Hall logo The dark green sweatshirts have a relatively discrete Wild Country Hall logo embroidered on the chest, left side. "Those of you in year six", announces Martin, "can wear a Wild Country Hall sweatshirt in place of your uniform sweatshirt once we get back. It's a real privilege and shows you have experienced Wild Country Hall."

(Extract from data rich narrative).

This extract from the data rich *narrative* was based on my observations On later visits to Small School, to conduct the group interviews, I observed many of the older children wearing their sweat shirts At Small School the wearing of Wild Country Hall sweatshirts is considered as a mark of maturity

I now turn to discuss the particular discursive practices that form part of the initiation stage of the Wild Country Hall rite of passage experience.

Communal living and dormitory culture.

Living together in a closed community for a period of around four and a half days, or 108 hours, is one of the key features of Wild Country Hall. During this period of time children are expected to work collaboratively at daily chores, (a full list of these

chores are provided in appendix 3.1.4) and which include serving at meal times, making the sandwich lunches and cleaning around the boot room, corridors, lounge and classroom areas, and the minibus.

Whilst some children will have had prior experience of domestic responsibilities at home, other will not have. In either case, making lunches for around 30-35 people will probably not be something any of them have done before. There is an adult present (see figure 9) and s/he will give some direction, but the children do the bulk of the work and make sure that the lunches are ready and waiting to be collected by all prior to the main activities of the day. As these activities are most often off site, there is no contingency position should a mistake be made.



Figure 9 Making the lunches.

Generally, children do not choose their room-mates. This is part of the rite of passage, living with people who are (to an extent) unfamiliar. This practice may occasionally result in some children being unhappy about the dormitory groups they are in:-

"Sometimes you end up being put in a in a dorm where, where there's people that you don't...really know about. Last year my friend Joe went, he got put in a dorm with...some people that he didn't really know. And there [were a] few others. He got on with it OK. There was one person and he was quite naughty or something,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.18).

This was an isolated report, however, and only occasionally did I form the impression that children were annoyed by late night activities in the dorms, and even then it was reported light-heartedly;

"I couldn't hardly get to sleep one night because everyone was making such a big noise. And then Janice started saying these things, like 'it's raining outside',"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.5).

"They kept getting into my bed and going "Aaeerrrrrrh!" in the middle of the night and it was really annoying and shining their torch in my face,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.22).

Throughout the group interviews the children were excited to tell tales of staying up late into the night playing games in their dorms when they (believed they were) expected to be asleep. Sometimes this was in the form of extended conversations that went on late into the night;

"The first night was, actually, very easy, it was actually fun because we had a chat and we had a few games, some people brought in games and stuff. When the lights went out we went to sleep. We did chat, we turned off the lights and we chatted. That was the bit when the boys came down and complained. We chatted..."

(Group interview, May 2006 p.17).

Sometimes staying up meant telling stories;

"we told funny stories, we made up funny stories,"

(Interview with MT May 2006 p.10).

At other times the activity centred around food, sweets, the famous 'midnight feast'.

For example;

"I was next door to him (points to MA). The first night I think Billy wouldn't stop talking so he kept us up. Then we just, we just kept on talking and then this other night we kept annoying Billy and he got really angry and he opened up the drawer and threw all the sweets across the floor just as Mr [teacher] opened the door. He got really angry and just went wheeeeeee and then opened the door and went "what's all this?" He just said, "right are there any more sweets in here?" "

(Group interview, May 2006 p.12).

And at times developed into games which ranged from the classical pillow fights;

"We had pillow fights, ha, ha. And everyone got into Jane's bed. Except me....Jane and me!"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.4).

Through the analytical, such as "murder in the dark" which features in the data rich *narrative*, to the sporting, with games such as cuddly toy cricket, which works like this;

"One person has their hands like this, almost like baseball, and someone throws a small soft toy at them, and they have to hit it over...they have to hit it round the dorm. But it stopped after someone hit my toy into the sink, ha, ha,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.12).

"We had bed Olympics that we did things like put a cup, a little plastic cup, in the middle of the door and stood on the top bunk and tried to throw Allan's cuddly toy (called Charlie) at it; and we had things like sliding down the bed and doing little shows and things like that. The nights were rather restless!"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.22).

To the much more boisterous;

"Well the first night I got terrible sleep but I managed to get used to it eventually, every time they got into my room they all started wrestling so I got into the wardrobe and said, 'but that's violent!'"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.22).

"We played bed Olympics. You just make up the games they've got to do and the person who does it the best wins. Sometimes we have to jump off the bed and fun stuff like jump off and do somersaults and stuff. Sometimes in the dark, sometimes with the light on,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.4).

And occasionally there were examples of individuals who didn't join in, but just kept themselves busy;

"I kept myself occupied with my watch. It's got a stop watch on it. So keep pressing start and stop to see how fast I can do it and the best I got was 12, erm 12 100ths of a second,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.25).

It is difficult to estimate how long this activity went on for, as the children would have found it difficult to time with any accuracy, when they went to sleep;

"Most people start talking and then eventually go to sleep. Some people talk for ages...the latest time we fell asleep was eleven,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.19).

"I think the latest we stayed up was about quarter to eleven. We had a night's sleep but I did running in the morning,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.17).

It is important to understand that these late night activities were anticipated and tolerated by the teachers and other adults. My notes show that some teachers

stayed up as late as 2.00am until they were confident that everyone was asleep. In so doing, they were perfectly well aware that the children were awake, talking and playing. Thus the adults were complicit in these late night activities, partly in the knowledge that such excited playing would be most difficult to prevent, and partly in the acceptance of this as part of the discourse of Wild Country Hall. In other words, staying up late is a legitimate part of the rite of passage.

In the knowledge of the likelihood of late night boisterousness activity, adults make attempts to arrange the dormitory groups in ways that avoid mixing together individuals perceived as problematic, and in this way serious incidents are probably avoided. Occasionally, however, this does not work;

"I think this year is the first for four or five years some of the dorms were a nightmare, interesting with the groups... I wouldn't have those together"

(Interview with adult parent/helper July 2005 p.4).

The fear of what lurks in the night.

Ghost stories seem to be a recurrent feature of residential experience. This was found by Stan (2008) as well as in my data. Stan observed that sometimes she;

"...would hear stories about wardrobes moving and children not being able to get a wink of sleep because they were terrified of the Red Lady. Nevertheless, most of the pupils seemed to thrive on the mystery,"

(2008, p.146).

The telling of scary stories seems to be very important in the experience of children who stay at Wild Country Hall. I assert this not just because of the qualitative richness of their narratives in the data, but because they were repeated on every visit I made to Wild Country and featured in the group interviews. When out at night

in the grounds of the centre doing the orienteering exercise I was walking with a small group of children and listened to them talking about their fear of the dark. They talked about what might be out there, Ghosts? Murderers? There is an interesting contrast between my observations and those of Stan (2008). Stan observed that the staff at the centre she investigated encouraged ghost stories;

“...the ghost myth was also perpetuated both by the staff and the visiting pupils...”

(2008, p.146).

“two large paintings dominate [the room]...children often ask about the man and the woman in each painting. This is when they are introduced to the Red Lady who is the ghost of the manor,”

(2008, p.145).

Contrastingly, staff at Wild Country Hall do not deliberately encourage ghost stories, but the children invent them for themselves anyway.

The Hall itself is in an isolated and remote place, a long way from other habitation and, perhaps significantly, far from artificial lighting apart from the internal lights of the building itself. Once outside, even in the grounds, it is very dark, a phenomenon that children used to towns and cities may rarely have encountered. On the moor, the dark is all encompassing. On the night walk across the moor, especially returning from the lambing shed visit when the night was dark, many children began to talk about the things that frightened them, and which might be lurking out on the moor. When I interviewed the children it soon emerged that telling each other ghost

stories and other tales that might frighten was an important element of the night time dormitory culture;

"Every night we turned the lights off straight away and turned on our torches and started talking about things,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.10).

"I our dorm...started talking about our bad dreams and horror movies and things,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.10).

Ghosts became the usual point of recourse to explain any unusual or imagined occurrence;

FA "... (we) turned on our torches and started talking about things. But it's really freaky."

Tony "why?"

FA "The tap kept going on and off."

ML "they think they have a ghost in their room!"

FA "There was definitely a ghost in my room, I ran out screaming one morning, there was a ghost, well something was touching my ear and like breathing on my neck or something; on the last day in the morning. Mr [Teacher] came in and I was asleep and he tried to wake me up and I fell out of my bed,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.10).

"When something happens everyone says "this place is haunted" and everyone sees weird things because one night we saw a glowing light,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.19).

Yet underpinning these stories and claims about supernatural happening, most children retain a preference for rational explanations;

"Yeah, and everyone saying there's notes saying "die, die" and it's someone messing around. Mandy said she wrote all of them",

(Group interview, May 2006 p.19).

Many children appear to join in this practice with some relish, but there were some incidences of children avoiding it, which is difficult in a dormitory. For example, one boy reported that;

"some people wanted to hear them, but some didn't and they had to cover their ears,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.19).

Children who showed a dislike of being frightened may have become the butt of others' attempts to frighten them even more;

MS "There was people in the dormitory they saw this man on the hill and they thought he had a gun and we started saying to Ryan, coz we had all our torches, and we started putting our fingers in front of the torches and he started crying and he ran off to Mr [Teacher] crying and we got into trouble for making him cry."

Tony "What did Mr [Teacher] say to you?"

MS "He said stop making Ryan cry because you won't like it if somebody else tells you a scary story,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.4).

It is interesting that children's fears in such circumstances appear to be more concerned with ghosts and strangers "...they saw this man on the hill and they thought he had a gun ..." (MS) rather than the more pressing if not obvious danger of falling over in the dark, or getting separated from the group. Their fear of strangers is worthy of greater exploration. There are no gates separating Wild Country Hall from the main road, which is about half a mile away, only a cattle grid to prevent animals from coming in. Theoretically anyone could walk in. Also, for reasons of speedy egress from the building in the event of a fire or other emergency, the doors are kept unlocked. The reaction to this of some children was highlighted in a postcard home which said;

"the door does not get locked at night. A mad-man could get in and murder us"

(Child's writing).

This reaction may be understood within the context of the security of schools, and schools as places of surveillance (Hope, 2009). All of the schools featuring in this

study are “walled communities” where it is very difficult for a stranger to gain access. Each time I visited I had to ring a bell and introduce myself to a receptionist who would open the door to admit me.

This attention to security is partly due to the reaction of society to the perceived danger from child molesters, paedophiles and the occasional deranged bearer of guns. It is part of what Furedi (1997) has called the institutionalised precautionary principle.

Guns have been used to kill innocent children and adults. For example, the attack on a primary school in Dunblane by Thomas Hamilton in 1996 when 16 children and one of their teachers were shot dead; or in Cumbria in 2010. Such attacks are very rare in the UK, though similar killings also occur abroad (e.g. recently in the USA and Finland) and when they do, they almost always command a high degree of exposure in the UK news media. When children have been inculcated into believing that strangers represent a tangible threat to their safety and wellbeing, as Furedi (1997) claims, it is hardly surprising that some of them find the discourse of openness, accessibility and trust prevalent at Wild Country disconcerting.

Homesickness.

The following extract from the group interviews will give the reader some understanding of the complex nature of homesickness as it was manifested during the residential experience investigated. In the following extract, I am talking to a group of children about staying away from home;

MR “I find it hard.”

Tony “What’s hard about staying away from home?”

MR (silence) “its.....erm its just...hard, erm.....to...I don’t feel as comfortable away...”

MT "the beds weren't comfortable..."
 Tony "did you mean the beds, [MR]?"
 MR "no...the feeling."
 Tony "how did it feel?"
 MR "it....feels....sort of, well, erm empty...it just...I don't know."..
 MT "it just feels even though you're quite warm under the duvet, there's something cold about it."
 MR "Yeah, something unpleasant."
 Tony "Does that stop you wanting to do it?"
 MT "No, the experiences do a lot more to make you want to go again more than the night feelings making you not want to go again. So you think the nights weren't very comfortable but the experiences were just amazing."
 Tony "you said something very interesting then, you said "night feelings""
 MT "well at night you've got lots of time to think, in the day you have not got much time to think, have you?"
 MR "because you're busy."
 MT "and I think that's done on purpose, I think you're kept busy so you don't feel, especially for the first couple of days they do the busiest things first like the outdoor business...so you keep on going and going and you stay up late and the second night you stay up late 'cause you have to go lambing, and then you stay up late with the orienteering and then you, you get less and less late as you go through,"

(Group interview, May 2006 pp.24-25).

These two boys are trying to express the complexity of feeling at times a little uncomfortable, and perhaps feeling that they miss home, together with the feelings of elation that accompany some of the outdoor adventure activities, and perhaps the sense of awe and wonder they have encountered in the natural landscapes, during their stay at Wild Country Hall. One boy (MT) has additionally summarised the tactics employed by adults to keep children busy so that they have little time to ponder feelings of homesickness. Homesickness seems to be an important part of the Wild Country Hall experience. For most this seemed to be a reaction early on in the process and soon passed, or was successfully coped with;

"...when I was in the bus leaving them, I was...upset,"

(Group interview, July 2005 p.2).

"I did [get upset] at bit at first, the very first time. two years ago."

(Group interview, July 2005 p.3).

Occasionally, individuals were affected by homesickness more intensely. Steven, in the data rich narrative, is based on the following interview data which provides a good example of more intense homesickness. It was the first time this child had been away from home and the problems began on the bus;

"The worst bit for me was just before we got on the coach erm because, my face got wet, to be honest...I was crying a lot, basically because I didn't want to leave my family I was feeling, oh no! what if it's awful? And I've left my family. I was upset when we left but once I was on the coach everything was all right,"

(Group interview, May 2006 pp.13-14).

Van Tilburg *et al.* (1996) indicate that night times appear to be one of the critical moments for homesickness and this is supported in my data;

"I remember one night Mr. [teacher] was waiting in our dorm for about half an hour coz Alan was crying,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.6).

"Alex was hysterical when he was going to bed, he was dreadful,"

(Interview with classroom assistant July 2005 p.5).

Children crying may not be due to homesickness. A child may be worried about those left at home, particularly if they have important domestic responsibilities that have been left. Also, children may worry about other things, like bed wetting, asthma, the financial constraints that their visit may put on the family. Whilst none of these reasons for crying were reported to me, this may be because children were embarrassed or reticent.

Other children seem to find bed times easier to cope with. For example, one girl reported;

"Some people just can't get to sleep without their mum coming to hold them. At home I like my mum being there but I can get to sleep without her being there. Because you get used to it, because when my dad is not here she doesn't have time. And so now she'll make our beds and just tell us to go to bed, so I just find it easier I think if my mum didn't do that I would be upset. But you get used to it,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.17).

This suggests that parenting practices and family norms are very important in the child's conceptualisation of homesickness;

"It turns out that till really recently (Alex's) mum has literally sat by him by his bed, even now as a year five, till he goes to sleep. And even now stays, not by his bed, but in the room until he goes to sleep, but that's a shame,"

(Interview with classroom assistant July 2005 p.5).

I do not know how this classroom assistant knew about the familial practices of this boy [Alex] as I did not ask at the time and did not get a further opportunity. It could be through shared knowledge in a small community, or it could be rumour.

Some of the children appeared more resilient in their own approach to staying away from home and were quick to offer generalised advice to others;

"...when they can't sleep, coz like, they're not doing very much. They remember that they're missing their mum and dad and they start thinking about it. They should try not to think about their parents, not think about them. Just think about what they are going to do today and having fun,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.6).

I asked the children who took part in the group interviews what advice, in terms of coping with homesickness, they would offer to other children about to visit Wild Country Hall. A lot of the children talked about bringing a teddy or a cuddly toy for night-time comfort, but this had been suggested by the school prior to the visit. Others suggested bringing a picture of home or the family, though there was debate about the benefits of this;

FC "Yeah, or something like a picture to help you remember home"....

MK "If you don't think about them you forget about them and...."

FC " no, it's nice to have a picture or a letter so you know nothing's happened to them and..."

FD "if you just forget about them then when you go back home you'll be like, who are they?"

MK "you know your parents, come on... you're not going to forget them"

FC " I think it's better to bring a picture."

MK "But if you've never been away before and you bring a picture of your parents you're going to sit and look at it and start crying."

FC "but some people are more sensitive than others,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.6).

Bringing a picture may present more problems than it solves;

"Well if you take a picture you might lose it and get worried coz you can't find it,

(Group interview, May 2006 p. 11).

Other advice centred upon keeping busy and joining in with things, especially in the unorganised periods of time;

MT "I would say just get on with what you ARE doing and don't think about what you would be doing at home or nothing just get on with what you are doing and have fun while you can."

MR "Try and be friendly with the people you're put with and don't annoy people.

MT "Talk to the people in your room, definitely. Even if we started wrestling, I felt better."

MR "Yes. Do do things at night. You do have time to do things in your room so use that time to keep you yourself occupied. To erm be social with the rest of your group in your dorm...(rather than) just lay there basically,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p. 25).

There was also good advice about focussing on the present activities;

"tell them not to always think about how good it was at home and like concentrate and enjoy what you're doing,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.11).

and not thinking about home;

"I would say stop worrying about home and have fun or you'll not really have fun at all. And by the time you get home it'll be like well I wish I'd have done that now and everything and your friends will be saying how fun it was and everything. And you'll think you should have paid attention and enjoyed yourself instead of thinking about home,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.11).

The phrase "stop worrying about home" may indicate another state of affairs. As some children are carers, or feel responsibility towards their parents and siblings, it might be that the child speaking above knew that other children were in such a position.

Because of such incidences of homesickness the teachers pre-empt this in a number of ways. Sometimes children are enlisted as informers, encouraged to report to the teachers if one of their peers is upset;

"Nobody got upset this time. That I know of. Last time I know that a lot of people got upset. I've got a lot of friends in year six, and Mr [teacher] told them to spy on me in case I got upset, and they told me it was because last time a lot of year fives got upset,"

(Group interview, May, 2006 p.17).

Some children may be more sensitive than others to the signs of homesickness;

I think one of (the boys in my dorm) might have been a bit (homesick) because he kept talking about at home and stuff, but he was doing all the

stuff. I think he was thinking about it because whenever me and Tim and Sam was doing stuff he was wanting to write in his diary and...instead of doing the stuff with us,

(Group interview, May, 2006, p. 11).

Often adults take on a counselling role. An example of this was provided in an interview with a classroom assistant at Small School who had been accompanying groups of children to Wild Country Hall for some years:-

"Esther had, you know, was in a dreadful state and Roz was in the same room and I remember saying to them that there's nothing wrong with being homesick. It's actually completely normal. It's how you deal with it and how you get over that and I said to her, I expect your mum and dad are at home thinking about you and thinking you're having a fantastic time and so you should think good things about them not lying here wasting your time being upset. But I said don't think there is anything wrong with you for being homesick. But Roz was all right actually."

(Interview with classroom assistant July 2005 p.5).

This is an example of an adult talking about homesickness within a discourse of normality, and reportedly supporting children through the experience. Small school encourage the parents to write a postcard or letter and send it to the children. This is explained as an attempt to alleviate homesickness, which sometimes is successful;

"I got mine midweek. It was funny coz my sister watches this programme every day she drew pictures of it and it was really funny. It made me feel they hadn't forgotten about me. Made me feel happy,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.6).

"It said they were all safe and things like that, it was quite nice to get a letter just to like erm, tell you...yeah,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.6).

On other occasions, however, seems to be a practice counterproductive in this respect;

"and then I forget about 'em for the whole...but when she sent me letters and when I read those....".

(Group interview, July 2005 p.3).

It may be that children who are already subject to homesickness are those most affected by the letters. For example, one boy, who was severely affected by homesickness, did not appreciate the well intentioned letter from home. It appears that he predicted the effect this letter would have on him;

"Only on the first night and when I received a card it kind of made me homesick, so I got a card on the Tuesday morning and it made me a bit homesi...very much homesick. A bit would be an understatement. I didn't read it till the evening, I couldn't bring myself to read it to be honest,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.14).

However, there is some evidence that children who might not be affected otherwise, do get homesickness pangs upon receipt of these letters. One boy, who was "a bit upset, kind of" when he received a letter, sums up the tension implicit in this practice very well;

"If you get one it makes some people sad, but if you didn't get one it makes you think they've forgotten you,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.21).

Some children do not receive letters from home "they forgot me," (group interview, June 2005, p.6) others have jokes played on them by their parents:-

"They got an old postcard from France and sent that and they wrote "having a lovely time in Ville Franc...only joking, hope you don't mind" ha, ha, ha. Then I got another one which was from my Gran, erm where my grandmother lives, and that was a new one, with no tricking in it. It made me feel better,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.28).

Of course, to reach the centre early in the week of the children's stay, the letters need to be posted *before* the children actually leave home, and like most secrets this one was revealed;

"My mum was, naughty. I caught her trying to post mine on Saturday. And she said she got a letter from Mr [Teacher] saying post it on Saturday,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.28).

Rites of passage (van Gennep, 1909/1960) capillary power in complex ways. This illustrates Foucault's (1981) views about power as complex strategic situations. At first, they position children as novices, but later empower them as initiated members of society whilst continually investing much power in accepted cultural norms and values. For example, a consideration of homesickness as a rite of passages initially concentrates much power in home and family as a nexus of security and attachment. When a child exhibits 'symptoms' of home sickness, for example, crying at night, the discursive power emitted positions the child as (temporarily) weak, but also exerts much influence over the adults who are prevented from rest and relaxation (to the extent that some do not get enough sleep). Eventually, many children are empowered to be able to cope quite well with being away from home, though it may become a long term mental health issue for a few (e.g. Trescothick, 2008).

Discourses of risk taking and confidence building.

In this section I will discuss confidence building within the neo-Hahnian framework (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b), the essence of which relies on providing a seemingly risky (Brown and Fraser, 2009) and exciting challenge which is actually safe. This is perhaps epitomised by the zip wire (figure 10). My observations indicate that most children relished the prospect of the zip wire, even though many seemed

apprehensive about it, and this provides an example of the 'sexiness' of risk (Loynes, 1996).

Zip wires are very safe. As well as sitting on a wooden seat and holding onto the ropes on each side of them, the child is belted into a rock climbing harness which is connected by a screwed down carabineer to a separate safety rope. The degree of attention given to this harnessing process is such that it takes many minutes to harness up before the zip wire is run; and to remove the harness afterwards. This causes queues and inactivity. During the zip wire activity at Wild Country Hall children spend most of their time waiting around. In figure 10, whilst a child runs down the zip wire, a centre instructor and a group of other children can be seen waiting by the tree on the right. In a group of 8, each ride on the wire necessitates around 35 minutes of waiting time.



Figure 10 The Zip Wire.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the idea of risk and challenge in outdoor environments building character was formulated by Baden-Powell (1930) and Hahn (Flavin, 1996), and developed by Mortlock (1984, 2002). Though more recently criticised (e.g. Brookes, 2003a, 2003b; Loynes, 1996) such ideas were prevalent in the data.

Challenge is structured into the activities, which also often take place in challenging environments;

"When I went to Wild Country Hall I climbed up the climbing pole. I climbed *three quarters of the way up the climbing pole but my hands were freezing* because it was cold so I had to come down. Then I sat down in my harness, held the rope and bounced down the pole. When I got down Miss G lent me her gloves to warm up my hands,"

(Child's writing).

Many of these activities are designed to encourage children to face up to their fears. For example, fears of heights or of the water. Overcoming these fears provides challenge and excitement;

"(I'm) not sked of the sea. I smiyal when I swalld a bit of the whter",

(Child's writing from scribble board, November 2004).

"Jo is a bit worried about Wild Country Hall because she doesn't like travelling long distances and she is afraid of heights",

(Children's writing).

"Then it was my turn! I was feeling excited when I started. When I was halfway up I wanted to come down because I had no hand or foot holds. Then [instructor] shouted up "Take your gloves off!" because Mrs W gave me some gloves to borrow. As soon as I took the gloves off I was able to climb to the top. [instructor] said when you get to the top to leave a bogey up there. The funniest bit was coming down because I was on the ground again,"

(Child's writing).

This child felt for a time that (s)he wanted to come back down. Such mixed feelings, of wanting to continue and wanting to withdraw, were recurrent in the data. In the following interview I am asking a girl about the challenge of being Pirate Captain. In this activity two canoes have been lashed together [see figure 7] and children take in turns to captain the boat on a treasure hunting voyage around a lake, following clues to move to various places, where they land and find another clue, and so on;

FC "well, I wasn't very confident".

Tony "you weren't, but did that mean you gave up? What did you do?"

FC "I stopped....r [inaudible] ing"

Tony "Stopped worrying or stopped rowing?"

FC "No, rowing!"
Tony "and did you just give up (being Pirate Captain)?"
FC "no, I still tried,"

(Group interview, July 2005, p.9).

Occasionally children may be pressurised into carrying on;

"But they did it. They still got over it, but it took a long time, say at the rocks and like mountain biking they just fell off their bikes. They were prepared to fail and it took a lot of coercion,"

(Interview with male parent helper, July 2005 p.1).

"...sometimes they make you do something in the rock climbing Mr [teacher] when there was this wide bit Mr [teacher] made me go across...and I didn't want to,"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.20).

It is difficult to know when encouragement becomes coercion, and when this becomes compulsion. Certainly, persevering and overcoming these difficulties is highly valued by the adults;

"...the ability (of the Wild Country Hall instructors) to challenge is what really inspires those children...(they) experience the real thrill of doing something that created a sense of danger, things which I don't think we can offer enough of just by doing things in school...anticipation of new and exciting events, part of the thing that gets them is that there is a certain fear of the next day, the unknown, certainly. It's not high-level but they are worried. They are, they know they are going to be challenged...(this) can't be replicated just by going on a residential visit to somewhere where you are not challenged,"

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008 p.5).

Is it desirable to raise fear in children? This question I pursued with the Head Teacher I interviewed, and he answered with an anecdote. As an experienced user of Anyshire's outdoor education provision, he had been asked to interview candidates for a post at one of the other residential centres. One question he asked

was whether it was desirable that children feel afraid prior to a new outdoor adventure activity:-

"...it was interesting that only one said that she felt they should feel fear because she didn't feel it was a challenge, sufficient of a challenge [if they didn't]. The other two were being, I think, very health and safety conscious. And I think she's right, I think there should be some anxiety..."

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008 p.3)

These challenges seemed to be valued because of the part they might play in promoting character, which is very much in the classical tradition of Baden-Powell (1930) Hahn (Flavin, 1996) and Mortlock (1984, 2002), and developing the self-concept (e.g. Ewert, 1983; Gibbs and Bunyan, 1997);

"(the beach) Olympics, which is seriously challenging, ha, ha, ha...seriously challenging, but endurance, not want to go to the toilet every five minutes, being actually able to prepare themselves for a day out so they get their kit together, get their lunch together they pack it all and they're responsible for packing. Building up these children's characters and their sense of self worth, responsibility, experiencing challenges,"

(Interview with Head Teacher June 2008 p.2).

Children also reported benefits from overcoming challenges, for example;

"Sometimes it makes you feel really good, because at the beginning you just look up there and you say "I'm not going to do this" but then when you get to the top and back down, you think "that's cool," "

(Group interview, May 2006 p.20).

The notion of risk taking in the outdoors, conducted in a safe way, is bound with the concept of 'the expert'. To take children into a potentially dangerous place in order to undertake risky activities demands expertise. This expertise has been formalised by bodies such as AALA in the UK (Ashton, 2010) and OutdoorsMark in New Zealand (OutdoorsMark, 2007). Staff at Wild Country Hall, which is authorised by AALA, all

must have the necessary outdoor leadership qualifications to supervise groups of children in specified activities. This discourse of expertise in risk management creates some interesting power relationships at Wild Country Hall.

At first sight, as might be expected, these discourses seem to position the children as without power. At a glance, the values and perceptions of adults dominate the centre and through this they exert power over children. Many examples of this occur in my data; from the control over children's time, to deciding on who sits where at the table, who shares a dormitory with whom, the continual reprimands given to Johnny, decisions about who had taken the lead in team games and challenges, these are all things done by adults to children. For example, the disciplinary incident in my story of Johnny swearing, which is based on observations, is a clear indication of rules set by adults that the children are expected to abide by.

In figure 11 it is the adult who has planned the surveying activity and it is he who now instructs or informs the children. There is a clear instructional discourse at play here, empowering the adult. Note how the children are all looking towards him.



Figure 11 Conducting a survey of water creatures.

Yet, sometimes, discourses empower children and simultaneously depower adults, for as Foucault points out, power circulates in a capillary fashion rather than being invested in individuals, and the following two examples indicate how this expertise empowers rather than depowers children.

Example 1: Well meaning adult helper exposed!

This happened during my observations of children from Hilly Edge School. Henry (pseudonym), the 19 year old instructor in charge of the group of 15 children and myself, was taking us back from the beach where we had made fires and cooked marshmallows.

"Henry realised he forgot the rope.

He said he would go back for it later. This would have added an hour to his day, so I volunteered to stay in charge for a few minutes while he doubled back to get it then.

Once he is out of sight the children begin running around, some are play-fighting. They make a lot of noise. Some go out of my sight into the trees.

I am concerned they are out of control.

I try to focus attention...on fungi. Most are disinterested.

Eventually Henry returns and quickly restores order".

(Field notes, February 2005.)

To contextualise this episode: I was a school teacher for more than 20 years before moving to work in higher education. During that time I had gained experience of teaching some difficult groups and individuals, and when I invited Henry to go back for the rope and took over the group, I had not anticipated difficulties. However, I had also tried hard not to position myself as an authority figure, in part to try to suspend those generational power issues raised by Mayall (2000) and discussed in Chapter 4. I did so by getting the children to call me by my given name and treat me as a 'hanger-on' rather than a teacher, helper from their school or one of the Wild Country Hall staff. Meanwhile, the discourse of expert and expertise had clearly positioned Henry as the adult in charge, even though he was 30 years younger than me, had his NVQ as opposed to my two degrees and PGCE qualification, and had much less experience with children. As well as empowering Henry as the expert, this discourse also empowered the children, or at least those uninterested in fungi, to disregard my attempts at exerting control over them.

Example 2: on the high pole.

"Children do the belaying. They are given clear instructions by the centre staff. There are six poles. Once the climbing starts the staff cannot view everyone at the same time.

Marcia (pseudonym for a classroom assistant with the Small School group) seems really concerned that a child may make a mistake. She spends some time close by one group. Sometimes she turns away".

(Field notes, April 2005).

In this example the discourse of expertise initially invests power in the centre leaders, but this is transferred to the children who are given responsibility for belaying their peers. In figure 12, for example, it can be seen that whilst there are

adults around (behind the pole, wearing a red helmet) the adults are not taking direct responsibility for the immediate safety of the children climbing the pole. This is being done by the children themselves. At the same time, school teachers and adult helpers unfamiliar with the techniques are positioned as in-expert and thus de-powered in these situations.



Figure 12 Climbing the high pole.

The empowering of children at the expense of adults who normally assume high powered roles in their lives may be assumed to be an important learning experience. Discursive practices that empower children resist both discourses of childhood as innocence and vulnerability (Greig, *et al.*, 2007; Muñoz, 2009) and that of childhood as wild or dangerous youth (Valentine, 1996) by placing responsibility on young shoulders. This did not, however, constitute a theme in the data generated through the follow-up interviews conducted with either the adults or children involved.

Failure.

On a number of occasions I observed children not overcoming the challenges set them. Rather, they experienced temporary failure. This finding represents a major tension between practice and outcome as much of the rhetoric surrounding outdoor learning is based on the premise that children benefit from overcoming the challenges they are set. In the data rich narrative, the character Josh fails on a number of occasions; on the rock climbing wall, scrambling through thick bushes, surfing and, on one miserable occasion, he fails to eat his packed lunch because his hands are dirty. My field notes are sprinkled with data of such occurrences; which, whilst never predominant (in other words, I suggest such failures are minor in number) nevertheless need to be acknowledged. Similarly, some children found being away from home, eating unfamiliar food in a group situation, or just looking after their own kit and belongings, problematic.

However, for some children, perhaps those who have been unduly protected from social reality at home, experiencing failure may be an unfamiliar social practice. As such, within this thesis and the context of learning as discursive positioning, these

failures may be beneficial in the long term as they facilitate learning. They may also be regarded as the rite of passage by some.

I do not wish to overstate the extent of such failures. As stated above, these occasions were never predominant in the data. It is important, however, to consider how discursive practices of failure and the power circulating around them, may position children. Just as Telford's (2010) research shows that attendance at the Ardentynny centre affected the majority of participants positively in some way - ranging from a stated love of the outdoor environment, to choices regarding use of leisure time and employment - we may conclude that for others, the effects may have been largely negative. In other words, the experience of failure may depower some children from taking further part in outdoor adventurous activity, or it may empower them to refuse in the future. Some children may be positioned to view participation in outdoor activities, especially perhaps those of a adventurous nature, not to be for them, and this may conflict with Government thinking (e.g. DfES, 2006) and the thinking of others who call for the general extension of outdoor activities for all young people (e.g. Rickinson, *et al*, 2004; Muñoz, 2009). In short, children are individuals. A single prescription of outdoor adventure may not suit all children.

Safety and responsibility.

I suggest that to invest in children it is necessary to ensure they are safe yet not to over-protect them. Attaining something approaching a reasonable balance is far from easy. Certainly the adults I interviewed believed that some parents were over protective of their children in ways that were unhelpful;

"That's without, beyond the normal bounds of children being homesick and it (his mum's attitude) adds to the burden, if you like. He'd have been homesick

anyway. But that whole thing about being scared to sleep in the room, and what have you..."

(Interview with classroom assistant, July 2005 p.6).

The Head Teacher I interviewed was of the opinion that the opportunities available at the centre were potentially most powerful for those children whose home life and parenting was perhaps over protective;

"Learning some self-sufficiency skills. Particularly... in the case of some children who have been looked after, waited on hand and foot all their lives..."

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008, p.2).

Safety is paramount in the activities the children undertake. For example, it is manifested in the attention given to adequate clothing;

"The quality of the clothing that's provided, the protective clothing has improved out of all proportion. Its unrecognisable now, it was fairly primitive when we first started. Most children still brought their own wellies and waterproofs, if they brought waterproofs at all.... But the coats, they were more like oilskins,"

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008, p.1)

"On the first day of our visit to Wild Country Hall we went to our room and we got dressed. Then we got our waterproofs and went to the slide,"

(Child's writing).

A washing and drying facility means that the children never need start a day's activity with wet gear. Similarly, the centres provide wet suits, rash vests, booties, caps and buoyancy aids when using the sea, thus ensuring both the care of the children and that the weather rarely inhibits planned activities. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for having the correct kit, though this does not always work. The children need constant support and reminding:-

"...eventually the children are sat in the mini-bus ready for the drive to the coast. Mick notices that Josh does not have any socks on. "Off you go find some", he orders Josh. "Who else hasn't got socks on?" four hands go up. "Go and get some socks!"

(Extract from data rich narrative)

There are many other examples in the data of adults intervening with advice, support or direct orders that are intended to maintain the well-being of children. For example,

"...and when we had done some raft building one lad; he just took his wet socks off and put them in his pocket. I made him put them on. If we hadn't have done that they would have gone home blistered."

(Interview with male parent/helper, July 2005 p 5)

The concept of investing in children by exposing them to new and perhaps challenging situations and positioning them to take responsibility for themselves and others can be seen at Wild Country Hall. The children are responsible for the safety of each other when they are belaying a climber on the climbing wall or pole, and in all of my observations this was taken extremely seriously. Safety is also evident in the way children are taught to look after group safety when out walking in remote countryside,

"I couldn't see the tail-end Charlie. The scout led the way and the tail-end Charlie made sure no-one fell behind,"

(Child's writing).

There was some suggestion that recent Health and Safety regulation has reduced the centre's efficacy. For example, the Head Teacher I interviewed pointed out that,

"...when we began going there, (children) were expected to do the washing up, most of the cleaning throughout the centre. But now health and safety has restricted that quite severely. The cooking and washing up is now done in the kitchen. Children are not allowed in the kitchen. Climbing tends to be in grounds now, as well, because there has been quite a bit of erosion on the north Devon cliffs (the safety inspectors) stopped us going out as much as we would have liked to,"

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008, p.1)

"(We had) to climb the waterfall [see figure 13]. It was really difficult because all of the rocks were slippery, and most of them were pretty high. We had lots of help from (the instructors) to make it easier for us"

(Child's writing).



Figure 13 Gorge walking.

"When we got to the top we were all really tired and soaked through! We were glad to get back to the lodge and get our waterproofs off. When we took our wellies off they formed a big puddle because of all the water that got in. We all had warm showers and were glad to get some food inside us. I sure did get a good night's sleep!"

(Child's writing).

Sometimes the intellectual demands of the activity adds to the challenge;

"Matt, who is very dyslexic and he, I was in a canoe with [instructor], and he said "Matt, get up, go and get the treasure....and read out" and he, really that was the biggest challenge of the week for him. And he did it,"

(Interview with male parent helper, July 2005 p.2).

Summary.

What I observed at Wild Country was a complex entanglement of power, discourse and discursive practice. A combination of the discourses of romanticised 'Great Outdoors' associated with images of the countryside and a 'rural ideal' (Muñoz, 2009), with the discourse of innocent childhood (Jones, 2007) and rites of passage (van Gennep 1909/1960) as children are removed from home to the centre. All of this is combined with discourses of risk (Brown and Fraser, 2009; Loynes, 1996), adventure (e.g. Mortlock, 1984, 2002) and challenge (e.g. Brookes, 2003a, 2003b).

My observations at Wild Country Hall together with the interviews I carried out, suggest that many of the discursive practices at the centre may be different to those discourses encountered by children at home and at schools. It is likely that some of the discourses are new to some of the children attending the centre and taking part in the activities there. The availability of previously un-encountered discourses is crucial to the model of discursive positioning outlined by Davies (1990, 2004) and Davies and Harré (1990). If learning is to be looked at through the discursive positioning lens, then it is vital that outdoor centres and outdoor programmes retain their distinctiveness, marking them as different to schools. Later in this chapter I will outline why I believe the efficacy of Wild Country Hall to promote distinct discursive practices may be endangered. I will explain how recent trends are in danger of rendering the centre as a learning space that is very similar to a school.

5.2.3 Learning as the discursive positioning of individual identities.

A major advantage of using the socio cultural perspective on learning as discursive positioning, is that it offers an answer to the question of learning transfer. My data show that children are able to utilise discourses encountered at the centre to position themselves. For example:-

"...it taught me how fascinating nature can be and how beautiful at first I just...now I think, like when we at the pond I noticed a like rock with a waterfall and I thought WOW! ..."

(Group interview, May 2006 p.14).

The way this boy emphasises the word "wow!" in the way he did, is making use of the discourse of appreciation of a natural environment. In the data rich narrative, Johnny, makes use of the same discourse when he articulates his care for the rock limpets. This part of the narrative was closely based on my observations:-

"See these little shell like animals?", asks Rod drawing attention to the limpets that cling onto the wet rock. "It's really important not to pull them off or break them. That would damage or kill them", he adds. "Why would anyone want to do *THAT?*" asks Johnny."

Many of the children re-identified themselves as being more confident, either in specific areas including those relating to particular adventurous activities such as climbing or surfing,

"...I know I can do it. I'm not scared of the sea now, either. I just smiled when I swallowed a bit of the water",

(Child's writing).

or in more general terms,

"I put my hand up more, I've not been such a scaredy cat!"

(Field notes, November 2004).

"I used to get bullied by one person who (was) in my group every single time And every time I was too afraid to even talk I was so scared but then I just said 'let's forget about this', because I knew how to do most of the things and nobody in my group could do it. So I just said 'OK move that one there, that one there, that one there.' And I wasn't scared after that I really felt, really quite, quite special actually, after doing that because sometimes people don't listen to me, but in the end they asked me 'what do we do?' "

(Group interview, May 2006 p.18).

These are potentially important changes in people's' identities, as they reposition themselves from reserved and under-confident to more confident, or from bullied and frightened to feeling less scared and more 'special'.

Focus on the process, on how this happens, is crucial. In providing an analysis of this process I will draw upon the model suggested by Davies (2004) and Davies and Harré (1990) discussed in Chapter 2, and the data generated through my research. First, I shall examine this process in the case of the participant who provided much of the data presented through the character Kirsty (and will retain that name here)

Davies (2004) suggests that the myth of the unitary person has largely been dispelled by post-structuralist analysis and that it is now acceptable to think of the individual as constructed and re-positioned through various discursive practices in which they participate. An example will help here. In my data rich narrative, Kirsty says to Rod -

"I put my hand up more. I've not been such a scaredy cat. I know I can do it I'm not scared of the sea now, either. I just smiled when I swallowed a bit of the water."

To understand how 'Kirsty' has re-positioned herself it is first necessary to analyse those discursive practices of schooling (Devine, 2003) in which Kirsty will have participated and that have previously positioned her. I consider it possible, likely

perhaps, though beyond proof, that in school Kirsty was participating in discourses of gender formation, neo-Liberal discourses of testing, attainment, (under)achievement, discourses of white working class aspiration and expectation, amongst others. She may have been called a "scaredy cat" before. Perhaps this was by a teacher who referred to her reluctance to offer answers or to ask questions, following the British schooling tradition of 'putting up hands'. In recognising that she now puts up her hand more and is no longer "such a scaredy cat", Kirsty is both acknowledging these discourses, but beginning to resist the way they formerly positioned her and so re-positioned herself. She draws upon and uses the discourses introduced to her at the centre, taking risks and over-coming challenges, to "imaginatively reposition" (Davies, 2004, p.128) herself as a 'can do it' person. Kirsty is, in effect, beginning to re-position herself as a more confident risk taker, a more rounded person.

Another example of the different discourses at play in schools and society at large, compared with Wild Country Hall can be found in an analysis of how fear may be constructed and overcome;

"I am not afraid of heights anymore because I climbed on the climbing wall and I went on the Zip wire",

(Child's writing).

Fear of heights or the sea may be considered as innate, internal and individual traits in psychology, but social constructionism sees them as discursively produced. These discourses may include gendered vulnerability and over-protectiveness of children, and may include fear as an acceptable reaction to concern. Children may well have encountered these fears; for example, of heights or the sea, before. Furedi suggests a discourse [though without using the term] of precautionary principle, "the

avoidance of unnecessary risk by playing safe" (1997, p 107) has been both institutionalised and extended to children. He goes on to suggest that there exists in highly developed western societies "a state of affairs where socialising children consists, above all, of inculcating fears in them" (Furedi, 1997, p 117). These discourses, operating at societal, school and family levels may be working together to position children as frightened people. At Wild Country Hall the discourse of facing and overcoming challenge is seen as positive and its power is productive (MacLure, 2003)

Some of the adults involved in my research go as far as advocating the inculcation of fear in order to emphasise the challenge;

"...part of the experience is the anticipation of new and exciting events, part of the thing that gets them is that there is a certain fear of the next day, the unknown, certainly. It's not high, level but they are worried"

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008, p 3).

Their residential stay at Wild Country Hall may be the first time some children have encountered this discourse. Thus, they are now able to make use of this discourse to reposition themselves as "not afraid of heights anymore" or "not scared of the sea now".

Davies points out the contradictory nature of the discursively produced self, "...each of these possible selves can be . . . contradictory, with other possible selves located in different storylines" (Davies, 2004, p 128). I have written an example of contradiction in the data rich narrative. This construction was based on my observations of children's behaviour on the beach and inside the centre. It features 'Johnny' who on

Tuesday when on the beach defined himself within the discourse of appreciation and care for nature when he articulated his care for the rock limpets;-

"See these little shell like animals?" asks Rod drawing attention to the limpets that cling onto the wet rock.

"It's really important not to pull them off or break them. That would damage or kill them", he adds.

"Why would anyone want to do *THAT?*" asks Johnny."

The following day, however, Johnny chooses to make use of a different discourse, that of brave and chivalrous masculinity protecting vulnerable females in the face of dangerous animals;

Johnny, Josh and three girls are vacuum-cleaning the corridors. The girls are staring down in horror at a large spider on the wooden floor.

"I hate cockroaches", says one of them.

Having overheard this, Johnny walks quickly over.

"That's not a cockroach", he declares, "It's a spider". He brings the ball of his right foot down and grinds it back and forth, stubbing out the spider. "There!"

This provides an example of those contradictions implicit in the positioning and re-positioning process raised by Davies (2004), and a re-emphasis of claims that individuals have degrees of agency over the discourses they select and make use of (Davies, 1990; Davies and Harré, 1990). Children may have access to a 'new' discourse of the appreciation and conservation of nature whilst at Wild Country Hall, but they are not compelled to make use of it in their positioning.

During the group interviews one boy claimed that the Wild Country Hall experience had;

"taught me how fascinating nature can be and how beautiful. At first I just...now I think, like when we at the pond I noticed a like rock with a waterfall and I thought *WOW!* And we managed to learn about the environment, and team work, and helping each other, and how to have fun with other people making friends"

(Group interview, May 2006 p.14).

Davies (1990) and Davies and Harré (1990), point out that the availability of erstwhile unknown or un-encountered discourses is vital to the process of re-positioning; hence my focus on these in part 5 2.2 above. Implicit in the transcribed text [extract from group interview above] yet of great importance here, is that this participant appeared not to have appreciated the fascination and beauty of nature before, had not encountered that discourse

Some of the discourses at play at the Wild Country Hall centre seem to be starkly in resistance to discourses that have the 'stamp of truth' (Burr, 1995) in contemporary society. For example, the discourse of social caring and responsibility evident at Wild Country Hall seems to resist that of individualism explained by Furedi (2004). The individual and societal consequences of inactivity and risk aversion are deliberately confronted and resisted by discourses of activity and calculated risk taking at the centre. This may be the first time some children have encountered such a strongly emphasised discourse of social interaction, with others not well known to them. My interviews suggest that engagement with these new discourses enabled some children to reposition themselves as both more active and more social. For example,

Tony "How did you feel when you got back on that Friday?"

MS "I felt like I had an energy drink or something, it sort of changed my feelings about things the Wild Country Hall bit it "

ME "Oh, I . "

Tony "Let MS finish"

MS "I think I have".

Tony "can you tell me a bit more about how it changed .."

MS "It sort of made me think a bit more about how I was, erm, how I was spending my life really, because I got a Game Boy for Christmas and I was playing on it for hours on end, but when I came back I erm I thought erm actually it was quite nice not doing anything like that, it was erm . .more active and social.. "

Tony "So have you played game boy so much since you got back?"

MS "I play on it sometimes, but that's when we have like when my sister does clubs and I don't take part in them, but I'm left watching her. I try not to play on it as much as I did....I was glad to back, because I missed my family and I wanted a rest,"

(Group interview involving MS May 2006 p.28).

Another strongly emphasised discursive practice at the centre is the positive positioning of domestic chores. My data reveals evidence that not all children are required to help in the home, for example;

"some children who have been looked after, waited on hand and foot all their lives,"

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008, p.2).

In one of my group interviews with children, the following dialogue took place:-

FO "My mum said I'd changed when I got back from Wild Country Hall, said I was more helpful."

Tony "Right, what do you think?"

FO "Scary. Because I laid the table, I don't know what came over me. I laid the table and I cleared it."

Tony "When was that?"

FO "When I got back from Wild Country Hall."

Tony "For how long"

FO "I still do it sometimes, I don't clear it but, I leave it cleared"

(Group interview, July, 2005 p. 1).

Here FO reports a change in her behaviour which, she maintains, was also noted by her mother.

It is important to note that this reported change is not articulated in acquisitional terms. The changes reported here by FO do not seem to be related to the acquisition of either knowledge or skills. As the Ofsted report on Small School (noted above, 4.2.6) points out, older pupils such as FO serve the younger children at lunch times.

Therefore, it is safe to assume that she had the knowledge and skills necessary to help with serving and clearing at meal times *before* going to Wild Country Hall. It is notable, therefore, that whilst the serving of lunches at school seemed to have little impact on FO, the domestic chores and responsibility at Wild Country Hall did. (Similarly, the schools involved either were, or were seeking, 'ECO-schools' status at the time of the research, but the discursive practices of the centre seem to have had a greater impact than those at the school)

Nor is FO's changed behaviour adequately explained by participation theories. Participation theories usefully explain how children learn to take on responsibility at lunch time in the school, and during their stay at the centre. Each can be seen as communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) in which children participate. Participation theories do not help in answering crucial questions. For some reason, it seems, the encounter with this particular practice was more powerful at Wild Country Hall than it was as part of the every-day practices at Small School. Why has participation in largely similar practices at the school and at the centre had different effects on FO's behaviour at home? Why has FO's behaviour and disposition changed following her stay at Wild Country Hall?

As acquisitional perspectives are largely unhelpful here, and participation theories seem to say too little about the individual's learning as their personal identity changes, (Hager and Hodkinson, 2009), I suggest that it is useful to look at FO's learning as her discursive repositioning. She does this herself through her actions and (according to her narrative) her mother also repositions FO as a more helpful, 'nicer' child who offered help with domestic chores. It may be explained by her

exposure to the discourse of communal living and corporate responsibility that features strongly in the Wild Country Hall experience, and her decision to act within this discourse upon return to home. At the centre children are expected to join in with domestic chores. They are expected to take on a high degree of responsibility for the domestic running of the centre. Crucially, the presentation of these chores and responsibilities is within a discourse of contented willingness to help (domestic chore time is called 'happy hour') and the expectation is that chores will be undertaken willingly and responsibly.

There was conflicting evidence as to whether or not such changes in identity were sustained, and this research question remains outside the remit of this project. It is worthwhile, however, briefly considering some of the evidence. As discussed above (5.2.1), one parent helper recounted the story of a girl who, he claimed, had become more confident, but later reverted to her former, more diffident behaviour soon after returning to school. Conversely, a classroom assistant told of more long-lasting changes;

"I think so much is placed on academic achievement that for someone like Jason who ran the fastest and climbed the fastest and all that other stuff it's given him a confidence. For people like that I think it is lasting. It is,"

(Interview with female classroom assistant, July 2005 p.4).

Dierking and Falk (1997), Hattie, *et al.* (1997) and Telford (2010) claim long lasting effects of field trips and outdoor programmes, but they have not considered learning in terms of discursive positioning. Further research might usefully investigate the longevity of the utilisation of these 'new' discourses in the positioning process after a longer period following residential outdoor education programmes. I return to this in my conclusion.

Recognising the potential of discursive positioning as a way of re-conceptualising learning in centres like Wild Country Hall, seems to promise much for future studies of outdoor learning Davies' (1990, 2004) and Davies and Harré's (1990) explanations of how discursive positioning may work as a process by which identity is constructed is not new, though it has not hitherto been used as a lens on learning outdoors

5.2.4 The times we live in: neo-Liberalism, performativity and the formalisation of outdoor learning.

In his letter to schools (appendix 3 1 5) asking them to participate in an evaluation of the centre's work the head of centre, somewhat apologetically states his position. He points out that .

"Wild Country Hall is undertaking a long term investigation to assess what impact a residential experience can have on its participants. To help us with this investigation could you select three pupils from the party coming to Wild Country Hall?...at the end of each day's activity staff will comment on the enclosed pro-forma on how the pupil has made progress against three of our learning goals that will be introduced to the group at the start of the course"

Emphasising the value of the resulting documentation, he goes on to say.

"The completed document is providing all concerned with a very pertinent and useful document evidencing progress through the week and exactly what benefits a residential outdoor experience can have"

Then raises queries about his belief in the value of the exercise.

"I apologise that this initiative is yet more paperwork but these are the times we live in!"

During my interview with the Head of Small school in 2010, I asked him if, given his 18 years experience of taking children to Wild Country Hall and the 'long view' that

gave him, he felt the staff at the centre might be 'playing a game', by which, I explained, I meant engaging in performativity practices. "Yes", he replied, without hesitation.

In this section I will investigate the causes of these performative practices, and how they may be impacting on the distinctive discursive practices of Wild Country Hall.

Whilst Wild Country Hall may offer children access to previously un-encountered discourses, many other discursive practices embedded into the work of the centre will be familiar to children. For example, the degree of adult control over most aspects of centre life, and the segregation of male and female children for sleeping and toileting. During my ethnographic observations at Wild Country Hall I observed two common and dominant pedagogic practices;

- First is the practice of instructors intervening during and, especially, at the end of sessions in order to debrief the children on what they had been doing. This practice is embedded in the experiential learning paradigm (e.g. Beard and Wilson, 2002; Exeter, 2001) developed from the work of Kolb (1984).
- Second is the adoption, or imitation, of current schooling orthodoxies.

Following my description of these practices, I discuss how the dominance of these particular pedagogic practices has arisen, pointing to the colonisation of centre activity by neo-Liberalism and performativity. I then suggest why this colonisation may be a worrying trend.

I begin, however, with a positive observation on the practices at Wild Country Hall. In her study of a similar outdoor centre, Stan (Humberstone and Stan, 2009a, Stan, 2008, 2009) found a high degree of risk aversion amongst both centre staff and visiting adults. My data suggest no such aversion to risk. The centre staff introduce risk in a well-managed way, and visiting adults I observed and interviewed all seemed happy with this. In the current social atmosphere of risk aversion (Furedi, 1997), this is to be commended.

Adherence to the Kolbian model.

Pedagogy in outdoor education has been dominated by the application of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, sometimes in amended and/or elaborated form (for example see Beard and Wilson, 2002). The pedagogy developed from this theory hinges upon reflective periods following experience. Typically at Wild Country Hall centre staff spend time, both during and after sessions, debriefing and facilitating reflection on the activities (Beard and Wilson, 2002, pp. 172-174). For example, after the beach survival day the instructor debriefed the party on the tennis hard court area at the centre. He asked them to give him examples of what they had done during the day, grouping these around the learning goals, such as caring and sharing;

*"When did you care for somebody today? When did somebody care for you?
Tell me when you did that today,"*

(Field notes, April 2006)

'Outdoor Business' is a game that involves children in teams competing against each other. Each separate activity is a problem solving 'game', including problem wall, tyres, spaghetti tangle, zip wire, blow the whistle, sheep and shepherd, skiing, and others. Points are allocated for successful completion. Outdoor Business usually

takes a full day, and is highly valued by schools because they feel it sets intellectual as well as physical challenges;

"The kind of challenge they tend to set now is much more intellectual when they go to things like the outdoor business, which requires a considerable amount of input from all the children and very intense thinking time spent, because time is very, very short that they're offered for each of the challenges and it's essential that they share and they plan and that somebody is elected from the group to make decisions,"

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008 p.1).

During Outdoor Business the Kolbian experiential method is fore-grounded, with sometimes intense iteration between experience and reflection. For example,

"After each activity, pupils are assembled in a group and asked to reflect on the activity. What went well? What went less well? How could you improve? Sometimes the centre staff indicate to people what they did,"

(Field notes, November 2004).

I also foreground this Kolbian approach in the data rich narrative. Following the team's initial failure on the problem wall, Rod, the instructor, held a debriefing. These debriefing sessions may last around about 10 minutes following activities which have lasted an hour or more. Pearson and Smith (1985) have argued that effective debriefing requires more time than is typically offered at Wild Country Hall. They suggest that the period of time allocated to it should be as long as the activity itself. Pearson and Smith's view is contested, with some literature suggesting facilitated reflection is not necessary (e.g. James, 1980; Rea, 2004, 2007b). Many outdoor educators stop far short of allocating as much time to a debrief as they do to the activity itself, and in this respect instructors at Wild Country Hall are probably fairly typical in the amount of time they dedicate to reflective debriefs.

I suggest a number of problems with this Kolbian approach. First, the debriefing sessions themselves seem to be in danger of constructing identities that may have been sometimes difficult for individuals to sustain. For example, in his debrief during the Outdoor Business game, one centre instructor commented on the role of a particular boy, stating that the boy,

"was a leader,"

(Field notes, April 2007)

In this case the boy identified as a leader may have gone away thinking he was, but could he live up to this label? How might this have affected other children?

A second problem is that the Kolbian approach formalises learning during the activity, it tends to be disruptive (this was particularly so during the Outdoor Business game) and can be repetitive.

Adhesion to a problematic model is not common only to Wild Country Hall. Wolfe and Samdahl (2005) suggest that outdoor education practitioners may 'cling' to assumptions and beliefs that shape their practice despite the absence of empirical evidence for their assumptions and beliefs. This seems to be the case with the experiential learning model. Williams suggests this is because, whilst the model has been widely critiqued, it still provides a model for practice which is perceived by practitioners to be useful, (personal e-mail communication with R. Williams, March, 2010).

Imitating the discursive practices of schools.

Here I am concerned with what I have called 'schooling orthodoxies' and what might be termed traditional, didactic teaching styles. In focussing on these practices, and in adopting this vocabulary, I am not suggesting that any schools that took part in this project, or their teachers adopt didactic pedagogical approaches. Nor am I suggesting that there is no place for didactic approaches at some times. The imitated schooling practice most strongly represented in the data, is the plenary session. These plenary sessions are part of the earliest experiences the children engage with at the centre. In them children are sitting down in the lounge, mainly passive and listening to a 'teacher' telling them what they are going to learn. There are two issues to be explored;

- First, the practice of staging relatively long plenary sessions where children are mostly sedentary.
- Second the adoption of the current schooling practice of overtly telling children what they are expected to learn. At the centre, as in many schools, this often takes the form of setting out objectives – learning goals – that have been devised by adults.

The long, staged and sedentary sessions.

"[After the low ropes course] the children are taken back inside and somebody from the centre staff talks to the group about the centre's aims and objectives; the learning outcomes that the centre expects children to achieve,"

(Field notes *passim*).

This is the second briefing the children will have encountered during the first afternoon at the centre. Both are organised in the discursive manner of an assembly or traditional school room. The children are treated as an audience with an adult as presenter;

"After lunch the Head of the centre assembles all of the children in the lounge for their first briefing. Children sit on comfy chairs, a few of them on the floor. In one corner is a piano. The walls are decorated with photographs of children from previous visits, and a large map of the area surrounding the centre. At the front of the lounge is a white board and computer. Teacher/instructor at the front using PowerPoint,"

(Field notes November 2004)

The structure of these sessions replicates some schooling practices. Children have to sit facing forward and are disciplined into being quiet. Adults control the sessions very closely, mimicking in the discursive practices of the school. For example,

"Teachers use body language, stares and glares, and sometimes intervene to maintaining order. Stop talking,"

(Field notes April 2006).

When there is interaction it is carefully managed, again in a 'schooling' manner, and as in school classrooms, some children manage to disappear into the background. For example,

"Questions and answers. 'What is the most likely cause of accidents?' Many children raise their hands. Some do not and are able to stay in the background. Answers offered: Falling off a rope. Drowning in the sea,"

(Field notes April 2005)

A similar session ends the week long residential. In this the children are debriefed on their achievements. Though supported by some visually attractive PowerPoint presentations and making use of interactive white board technology, these fundamentally sedentary sessions sometimes resulted in bored, restless young people and occasionally contributed to poor behaviour (field notes). One of the noticeable features of this was that some children found it difficult to sit down for relatively long periods of time and remain fully engaged with the presentations. The power of this discourse of schooling works on both children and adults. Some

children would fidget and some were reprimanded for this. I represented such incidents in the narrative of Wild Country Hall.

There is ambiguity here. These long, staged sessions that are largely sedentary experiences for children, are part of the (in)activities of an outdoor education centre that may be assumed to be about strenuous, physical activities outside. This seems to be part of how the centre has traditionally practiced. Before the adoption of the learning goals, the beginning of the week long programme would have been

“...very much the same. But they didn’t have the identified learning goals. The talk would have been much the same,”

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008 p.2).

Thus, an introductory talk would have started the programme, though would have been about:-

“their activities, experiences encouraging people to share to work together to support one another, when somebody has a skill to make best use of it. And explain what challenges were, who was there to support them. It was much the same, but [is] much clearer now. Much more clearly identified learning goals,”

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008 p.2).

Linking the centre to the school curriculum.

“We offer a wide range of study opportunities from Key Stage two through to Advanced Level. Many of our study groups follow field study projects in Geography and Environmental Studies to GCSE and A/AS Level. Environments within easy reach of the centre include river, woodland, pond, rocky shore, sand dune, moorland, beach; and village and town. Most National Curriculum subjects can be enhanced at the Centre.

Some of our visitors opt for combined outdoor adventure activity and field study courses, enabling them to experience a greater breadth of opportunities that the centre has available. The centre has a well stocked field study resource area, and visitors have access to four computers with microscope links, state of the art weather station, OHP and slide projector,”

(Extract from the Wild Country Hall website).

The discourse of neo-Liberalism underpins the centre's offer to schools, for if the centre does not attract business it will close. Neo-Liberalism has placed Anyshire's centres in competition with each other as well as with private sector outdoor centres. Thus, they try to link to the schools' curricular needs, appealing to those teachers in Anyshire who may think that taking pupils to Wild Country Hall will enhance their attainment in tests and exams. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, there is evidence that participation may well do so (Bailey *et al*, 2003, Christie, 2004, Dismore and Bailey, 2005). There is also evidence that studying geography and environmental sciences in the field promotes both acquisition of procedural knowledge, subject specific skills and enhanced understanding of the subject(s) (Ewert 2004, Knapp and Barrie, 2001; Nundy, 1998, 1999). Also, implicit in the centre's offer to schools is the view that the adventure activities they offer may contain a "greater breadth of opportunities".

The adoption of Learning Goals.

Wild Country Hall has adopted six learning goals.- Caring and sharing, packing the sac, learning for life; adventure for life, risky business, and making the future. Instructors at the centre follow the current schooling orthodoxy of telling children what they are to learn by explaining these learning goals to the children. The presentation of these intended learning outcomes positions the children as sedentary, spending an extended period of time at the beginning of the week listening as these intended outcomes are explained to them. A similarly long period of time evaluating the same outcomes takes place at the end of the week. When asked in the final plenary session what they had learned, many children reiterated the learning aims,

"Children sat down, facing forward. Instructor uses PowerPoint to remind them of aims. Instructor asks the children what they have learnt. Many hands go up... "How to pack the sack!" "I learnt how to make a better future, by reducing, reusing and recycling." "Caring and sharing, it's less about me and more about we,"

(Field notes November 2004).

These bland and totally predictable answers need to be compared with the answers the same children gave to my interview questions (examples of this are widespread through my data) when children were minded to report much more meaningful learning. This suggests that what children learn may be different to, even more than, what was planned for them (Shepherd, 2007).

Recently, the centre has asked schools if they will spend time in school the week prior to the visit to introduce these learning goals to the children (Wild_Country_Hall, 2003, (see appendix 3.1.3). The current schooling orthodoxy of explicating intended learning outcomes has been firmly critiqued (e.g. Hayes, 2007). Hayes outlined the drawbacks both of squeezing children's learning into 'predetermined packets' of time to meet learning objectives, and of articulating intended learning outcomes to children; not least because this level of pedagogic control may stifle the creative and constructive role of children in their own learning (Strauss and Quinn, 1997). Shepherd (2007) expresses concern at such practices on the grounds that as there is no universal and absolute best practice in education, adopting the suggested 'best practice' of others uncritically may result in settings embracing practices that may be inappropriate to their context. I suggest that the practice of introducing intended learning outcomes to children – telling them what they are to learn - may be less appropriate to outdoor centres and outdoor programmes than it is to schools.

The centre also set out to track, or audit, children's performance against these learning goals. In a letter to schools (Wild_Country_Hall, 2003 and appendix 3.1.5) the Head of the Centre explains that they are undertaking a long term investigation to assess what impact a residential experience can have on its participants. Schools are asked to select three children, the criteria for selection being left open to them. At the end of each day's activity staff will comment on the form on how the pupil has made progress against three of the learning goals that will be introduced to the group at the start of the course. The form is in appendix 3.1.2.

Tracking progress and trying to demonstrate impact on a day-to-day basis are the discursive practices of performativity. That this represents a colonisation of the centre by the performativity discourse is evidenced by the apology for the paper work this will cause schools given by the Head of Centre in his letter, in which he also states " .these are the times we live in!" (Wild_Country_Hall, 2003).

However, the narratives of both children and adults in my data indicate that other learning took place, learning that stands apart from the intended learning outcomes articulated to the children. In that respondents in my interviews chose not to concentrate on the intended learning goals, I can only conclude that other learning was more important to them. Some examples of this will be useful.

First, the literature suggests evidence of powerful opportunities for spiritual learning especially in developing a sense of awe and wonder (Meehan, 2002, Webster, 1982) provided by outdoor environments (e.g. Hitzhusen, 2004, Rea, 2003). Though these do not appear in the centre's articulated learning outcomes - these activities are not

articulated as intended learning outcomes - there is evidence to suggest it is nevertheless occurring, and is valued by both adults and children. For example, centre instructors take time to pause and encourage the children to observe and think about the land and seascapes around them, offering opportunity for feelings of awe and wonder. Further examples are evident in my data. For example, some children seemed to find the visit to the lambing barn awe-inspiring and talked about it at length afterwards, and the child who seemed awe-struck by the rock with the waterfall (both reported above with reference to data). Research suggests awe-inspiring experiences are more common in the dark (Paffard, 1973) and this is supported in my data. Walking over the moor at night allowed children to experience natural darkness, often for the first time. Though awe and wonder are not mentioned in the learning outcomes explained to the children, participants found the darkness is;

“...always the source of some excitement. When you stop, which we do most times (coming back from Lambing) and you look down that valley, you can only see a twinkle of lights way out on the hills, there’s a light down below you in a house, and nothing else. It really does inspire a sense of awe,”

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008 p.6).

He went on to describe the reaction of children walking back to the centre, across the moor at dusk, and the fascination of the children as they sat in that dark after the sun had disappeared (reported above);

“One of the best nights we’ve had up on the moor, when we realised the sun was just about to disappear and we made them just sit down in the heather and watch. There was total silence, absolute total silence even after the sun had disappeared...we talk about inspiring awe and wonder, that really was one of those moments.”

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008 p.6).

A second example concerns aesthetic opportunities. Though they do not present it to children as a learning outcome, staff from the centre encourage artistic endeavour. For example, they encourage the children to use their imagination to create sculptures from natural materials during the coasteering activity [see figure 3]

In that they are not made clear to children, these examples may be described as 'unintended learning outcomes'. This does not mean they are undesirable nor unexpected, merely that they are not made clear to the children as other intended learning outcomes are.

My argument is that many experiences fore-grounded in my data, and which seemed to be highly valued by participants, were not necessarily connected to the intended learning outcomes valorised by staff at the centre. For example, visits to the rock pool, the lambing shed and the walk across the moor at night were recurring themes in the data. These were planned and organised activities, but spiritual learning, or awe and wonder, were not the intended learning outcomes explicated to the children. "We talk about inspiring awe and wonder," says the Head Teacher interviewed, and there may well be informal discussion amongst the adults concerning the desirability of this.

It seems clear from my data that it is not necessary to articulate intended learning outcomes – for example, prior to the visit to the lambing shed or the walk across the moors – for children to learn from the experience. It may even be detrimental to learning to make such intentions explicit. For example, had an 'intended learning outcome' of awe and wonder been dictated to children before they went to the

lambing shed or onto the moor at night it may have reduced the impact of the visit. 'Flagging' the intention to the children might, in a way similar to the reduction of novelty in Orion (1989) and Elkins (2008), reduce the effect of the experience.

How and why have schooling practices become part of the pedagogy at Wild Country Hall?

The practice of presenting intended learning outcomes to the children is a relatively recent development into the pedagogic practices of the centre,

"... the biggest changes will be on the Learning Objectives side, identifying links with the National Curriculum, looking for opportunities to teach, particularly PSHE (personal social and health education) personal development (so) the kind of challenge they tend to set now is much more intellectual when they go to things like the outdoor business game,"

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008 p 1).

This process can be seen as part of the much wider phenomena of performativity (Ball, 2003, 2004a, Lyotard, 1984) and neo-Liberalism (e.g. Davies and Bansel, 2007), which was explored in Chapter 3. The Government Manifesto for outdoor learning (DfES, 2006) emphasises organised, planned and managed approaches to learning. Anyshire LA has emphasised the need for measurable learning outcomes to all four of its outdoor education centres, and Wild Country Hall has responded to this in the ways described above. Some schools choose to undertake specific studies that link with their school-based work and have an intended outcome that has direct links with the National Curriculum. For example, a walk along a local river offers opportunities to study river development in general as well as the natural history of a particular river that is prone to flooding. The Head Teacher interviewed attaches the trend towards formalisation of learning at the centre to demands from the LA;

"They [the centres] had to find ways of convincing Head Teachers that it wasn't just a holiday. They had to look at what learning opportunities they were offering and how those actually contributed to development of National Curriculum... so the National Curriculum's existence was in a way a good, supportive tool for centres when they were looking for ways to explain to schools what they could do,"

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008 p.1).

This helps to explain an element of the formalisation of learning at Wild Country Hall, especially the links to the National Curriculum. It does not, however, explain the move towards dictating to children what it is they are intended to learn. This:-

“...came in as there were more demands from the LA to justify spending the money to support them, the centres. The centres had to sell themselves, and they had to sell themselves as educational establishments in order to fit within the parameters that the LA were putting,”

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008 p.1).

The language used here is the language of neo-Liberalism, of competition and market forces; centres had to sell themselves, and they had to sell themselves as educational establishments. The practice formalising the intended learning outcomes was one reaction to financial concerns. Anyshire's outdoor education centres were threatened by budgetary constrictions and had to make a stronger 'educational' claim in order to secure their own futures. Their response to this has been to adopt those practices and orthodoxies that have become common in schools. This practice bears the hallmarks of performativity.

If performativity (Ball, 2003, 2004a; Lyotard, 1984) is considered as a practice where performance becomes the activity, as discussed in Chapter 3, then it helps the understanding of the plenary sessions where centre staff may be seen as 'performing' to teachers and head teachers in order to help convince them of the educational benefits of the centre experience, for Anyshire's centres;

“...had to find ways of convincing Head Teachers that it wasn't just a holiday,”

(Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008 p.1).

“ the centres have been, and are ‘under the cosh’, they have their financial targets and if these are not met there are problems. One way of ensuring enough schools participate is by focussing on the learning goals. The LA does insist on evaluations, it demands an A3 sheet summary of achievement and standards. Learning goals help fulfil this audit,”

(Interview with Head Teacher, May 2010 p 1)

The feeling of being ‘under the cosh’ of financial management is probably not unique to Wild Country Hall or the other Anyshire centres. Taylor, *et al*, (2010) found that 38% of LAs reported a decrease in the funding of their centres, whilst only 19% of them reported rises. Nor is the situation likely to change in the near future, as just under a half of LAs researched by Taylor, *et al*, (2010) said they would be decreasing their funding in the next few years.

Performativity can be seen as an artificial or *ersatz* practice. I asked the Head Teacher of Small School, who has been visiting Wild Country Hall for eighteen years, how he valued the plenary session and learning goals. After reading my narrative, and a draft of the current chapter, he said of the sessions -

“You rightly point out about the long sessions. They may not be needed. I have never questioned them because I think the centre benefits children in spite of them and I know [Wild Country Hall] has to, or they will go down,”

(Interview with Head Teacher, May 2010 p 1)

On learning goals, he thought that they were also necessary, not as an aid to learning, but to convince Anyshire authority of the meaningful work of Wild Country Hall. He maintained, however, that ‘real’ learning took place despite them;

“ knowing [the head of centre] and the people who work there, I would say that whilst they have a healthy respect for use of the learning goals, they know what the important features of their work are and concentrate on these, keeping the learning goals in mind,”

(Interview with Head Teacher, May 2010 p 1)

5.4 Summary.

In this section I have shown the results of my analysis of data. First, I investigated the data to see what it told me about learning. The data suggests the following;

- Traditional perspectives on learning as acquisition of knowledge and/or skills, which are reliant on the problematic concept of learning transfer (Hager and Hodgkinson, 2009), are largely inadequate for explaining the learning reported throughout my data.
- Socio-cultural perspectives on learning as participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) are more helpful, but still problematic.
- The Kolbian experiential learning model (Kolb, 1984) is used extensively and in an uncritical way.
- The perspective or lens on learning as individual identity formation through discursive positioning (Davies, 1990, 2004; Davies and Harré, 1990) is of substantial use in explaining the learning outcomes reported to me.

Next, I undertook an analysis of the data to discover what distinctive discourses and discursive practices were embedded in the practices of Wild Country Hall, as the availability of hitherto un-encountered discourses is crucially important to the model of identity formation proposed by Davies (2004). The data suggests the following discourses were available;

- Place: framed in terms of the 'great outdoors' and associated discourses of awe and wonder (Meehan, 2002; Webster, 1982), environmental appreciation, conservation and sustainability (Eco-schools, 2008).

- Rites of passage (van Gennep, 1909/1960) living with people who are (to an extent) unfamiliar and coping with homesickness (e.g. Van Tilburg, *et al*, 1996)
- Overcoming fears: fears of the natural world (e.g. heights, the sea) and the 'supernatural' world, or the unknown (things that might lurk in the dark)
- Confidence building, a planned and deliberate attempt to set challenges that the children were likely to overcome (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b), but some children fail

I suggest that their residential stay at Wild Country Hall may be the first time some children have encountered these discursive practices, and that they are thus able to make use of them to reposition their identities as suggested by Davies (2004) and Davies and Harré (1990)

It was immediately obvious to me, from my first observations at Wild Country Hall, that some of the pedagogic practices there were somewhat similar to those common in many schools. In that the distinctiveness of discourses prevalent at Wild Country Hall are crucial to discursive positioning (Davies, 2004; Davies and Harré, 1990), my final task was to search the data for evidence that schooling discourses might be impinging upon the pedagogy of the centre. The data suggests the following,

- There is not the degree of risk aversion reported in recent studies of other outdoor centres (Humberstone and Stan, 2009a)
- There has been a formalisation of curriculum and pedagogy in response to LA agenda and demands, in turn, the LA are responding to Government neo-Liberal agenda.

- These agenda and practices may be seen as the discourses of neo-Liberalism (Davies and Bansel, 2007) and performativity (Ball, 2003; Lyotard, 1984).
- The practices manifest themselves at the centre especially in the use of long plenary sessions in which children are largely sedentary, and in the pedagogic practice of telling children what they are to learn by spelling out to them intended learning outcomes.
- The vast majority of the learning outcomes reported to me by children and adults were not previously presented to the children as intended learning outcomes.

Chapter 6: Conclusion.

"...doing fieldwork has been, and remains, the defining requirement for becoming [an anthropologist] in the twenty-first century. As the slippage deepened between the original motives for fieldwork and its increasingly taken-for-granted status, it became... a mandatory *rite de passage*,"

(Rabinow, 2007, p. xi)

In his 'afterword' to Rabinow's original text (Rabinow, 1977) Bourdieu also concluded that field work, which is "surrounded by secrets and mysteries", is an initiation rite (1977, p. 163) My work has been twofold -

- Through my ethnography of Wild Country Hall, to provide a new synthesis of thinking about outdoor learning, a conceptualisation of outdoor learning as discursive positioning, and to identify the discursive practices at the centre.
- To undergo my *rite de passage* (Rabinow, 2007, p. xi) as a researcher and ethnographer

In the preceding chapters I have presented a synthesis of thinking about learning in residential, outdoor education centres that has not been presented before. In so doing, I have demonstrated that I have learned much about the process of qualitative research in general, and ethnographic research in particular. In my conclusion I will now undertake an appraisal of this research in terms of both the contribution it makes to knowledge and understanding of outdoor learning, and in the weaknesses contained within it. Then I will make a number of recommendations both for policy and practice, and for future research, based on my thinking.

6.1 An appraisal of the research.

In this section I appraise my work in so far as it relates to learning viewed through the perspective of discursive positioning, the discursive practices at the centre studied and the colonisation of the centre.

6.1.1 Learning as discursive positioning.

Part of my contribution to knowledge in the field of outdoor and adventure education and learning is applying a socio-cultural perspective, or lens, on learning as discursive positioning. I began by asking whether discursive positioning might be a useful lens on outdoor learning, and through my research suggest that it is.

Discursive positioning is not new. It can be traced back to Berger and Luckmann's (1966) thinking about identity within their treatise on social construction. Added to this is Foucault's conceptualisation of discourse. Discursive positioning was then developed from the social psychological work of Harré (1983) and the social constructionist work of Davies (1990, 2004) and Davies and Harré (1990), work that problematises the notion pervading Foucault's work that individuals are without agency.

My suggested discursive positioning lens on learning is new to thinking about outdoor education centres and outdoor learning more generally. In bringing it to the fore, I am bringing a new perspective to bear on an old issue, that of acquisition and transfer, and thus "adding to knowledge in a way that hasn't been done before," (Phillips and Pugh, 1994, pp.61-2).

Looking at learning as discursive positioning is in many ways a modest suggestion. It calls only for the acceptance that as individuals encounter diverse and always competing, resistive discursive practices, they may exercise a degree of agency (Butler, 1997; Davies, 1990; Kettle, 2005) in which of these discourses they make use of to position themselves (Davies, 2004; Davies and Harré, 1990).

In other ways, looking at learning as discursive positioning is more ambitious. Looking at learning as discursive positioning may disturb traditional conceptualisations of learning. As discursive positioning is a human and social practice, I side with Stables (2005, 2008) in suggesting that learning and living are, if not synonymous, then deeply entwined. What does this have to say about notions of the 'learner', or the concept of a child's disengagement from learning, or underachievement in learning. As learning is seen here as a socially constructed theoretical concept, then, I suggest, a 'learner' (engaged or otherwise) is similarly constructed. This presents a number of issues -

- Considering learning as discursive positioning troubles a number of widely accepted assumptions about schools, schooling and learning. For example, continuing with the example of disengagement, there may be an assumption in society that disengagement from schools and schooling equates with a disengagement from learning. When considering learning in terms of discursive positioning, such an assumption is problematic, as humans are *always* learning.

- Learning as discursive positioning might be helpful in explaining disengagement from classroom/schools as the exercise of agentic choice that rejects the discourses of the classroom (e.g. Devine, 2003) in favour of other discursive practices. Disengagement is a discourse and, as such, it both positions and empowers. For example, O'Donnell and Sharpe (2004) explain how masculine identities are constructed from peer group discourses which conflict with the discourses of schools. This positions the individual with an identity that some in society label 'disengaged'. Similarly, it may be that those young people society labels as NEET (not in education, employment or training) have actually exercised agency in positioning themselves as such, and thus have *learned* to be NEET.
- Linked to this, considering learning as discursive positioning of individual identity challenges conceptualisations of learning framed only as *positive* change.
- Considering learning as the social practice of discursive positioning troubles the concept of 'life-long learning' and the separation of learning (through schooling or higher education, for example) from other aspects of living. As Stables suggests, learning is part of life to the last breath, culminating in our learning how to age and die. Contemporary social debate surrounding the way we care for the elderly, euthanasia and dying with dignity, is forcing many individuals to encounter new discourses. Their discursive positioning as they make use of these discourses, may be seen as learning.

One of the weaknesses of my study of learning as discursive positioning relates to the amount of exposure to previously un-encountered discourses children may have in their five day residential stay at Wild Country Hall. McCulloch raised this problem in relation to his own study (of sail training experiences) and communities of practice "The short life of any particular group of sail training," he argues, and the "exposure of trainees to a few days participation [may be] insufficient to create the conditions for either of [Wenger's (1999) criteria], to be achieved," (McCulloch, 2007, p 300). I concur with McCulloch that there must be at least the possibility that longer periods of time spent in association with new discursive practices may be needed before children can begin to take these practices on board, and use them in the repositioning of themselves. Yet time cannot be the only, nor even the prime, consideration. It may be that some newly encountered discourses are so different, or have so much impact, that a brief encounter with them is enough to have an effect.

6.1.2 Discursive practices at Wild Country Hall

My main contribution to knowledge in the field of outdoor and adventure education lies in answering my research question about the discursive practices at play in a residential outdoor education centre. I have made transparent those discourses that make Wild Country Hall distinctive and different to the schools that pupils come from. I have identified a number of new discourses at Wild Country Hall which have been discussed in Chapters 3 and 5. I summarise these as:-

- The discourse of place. The "great outdoors" and the associated discourses of awe and wonder (Meehan, 2002, Webster, 1982), environmental appreciation, conservation and sustainability (Bogner, 1999, 2002; Ewert, 2004), always mediated by the understanding that place is socially constructed, (Augé, 2008).

- A discourse of being taken away from home and family to face and overcome fears; encountering and coping with homesickness (Van Tilburg, *et al.*, 1996), living with new people, encountering strange customs and unfamiliar social practices, fears of heights, water, which I have considered as latter day Rites of Passage (van Gennep, 1909/1960).
- The discourse of confidence and resilience building by confronting children with challenges and encouraging calculated risk taking (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b).

A potential weakness of my contribution in this area is the overriding question of how I can be confident these are discourses, rather than mere viewpoints. This question is akin to one of those 'labyrinthine' questions Foucault teases us with. The question of what is, and what is not a discourse is largely unanswered in the literature. This makes discourse both a hugely useful concept and a most problematic one. Throughout I have tried to recognise, and expose where I can, the power structures and conflicts within and between the discourses I have foregrounded in my thesis. I have considered power as circulatory and capillary (Foucault, 1981; MacLure, 2003); as productive as well as repressive. Thus power, as well as controlling and positioning human 'subjects', produces both outdoor learning and the challenges, failures, pleasures and benefits found by some therein, (Zink and Burrows, 2006).

In these ways, it may be considered that the practices I have observed and written about are Foucauldian discourses and discursive practices *only because* I treat them as such. This may not matter; for I am not attempting to prove the practices of Wild Country Hall to be discourses. I am merely posing the suggestion that considering

these practices in discursive terms, thinking of them as Foucauldian discursive practices, is a useful way of considering them because it allows us to consider how they may be used in the discursive positioning of the individuals who encounter them. And, as I have argued above, discursive positioning is a useful way of looking at learning in the Wild Country Hall centre.

6.1.3 The colonisation of outdoor centres by government and Local Authority agenda.

Accepting (at least for the time being) learning as discursive positioning, outdoor centres can only work effectively when they introduce new discursive practices to the children who go there. My thesis is substantially that outdoor education centres contribute to learning through their distinctiveness and difference to schools. Central to my argument is that previously un-encountered discourses are all important in enabling 'learning' in outdoor education centres. It follows from this that the distinctiveness of these centres, that is the degree to which they are different from schools, is paramount in their effectiveness.

The problem I observed at Wild Country Hall was the degree to which those classroom and schooling practices, outlined by Devine (2003), Hayes (2007) and Stables (2005), seem to have become accepted practices in the pedagogic life of the centre. The inactivity promoted by those long, largely sedentary plenary sessions and the emphasis on intended learning outcomes - the learning goals - that I describe fully in Chapter 5, are major ambiguities revealed in my research. I have tried to explain these ambiguities in terms of neo-Liberalism (Davies, 2005, Davies and Bansel, 2007) and performativity (Ball, 2003, 2004a; Lyotard, 1984) and write of the colonisation of the centre by government and LA agenda. In critiquing the role of government, national and local, in this way, I am not suggesting they should have no

say in the work of outdoor centres nor that outdoor centres should be unaccountable for what they do. I am merely pointing out that the strength of outdoor centres may lie in their difference to schools and these differences should be encouraged and developed, not diluted.

6.1.4 An evaluation of the research methodology.

I chose ethnography as I felt this had particular advantages for understanding the experiences of participants at the Wild Country Hall Centre. The advantages of ethnography were discussed in chapter 4, part 2.1. I might have chosen alternative research methods, but these would have resulted in a different outcome. Were I in a position to begin again I would still take an ethnographic approach as I feel this methodology is well suited to my research. Ethnography suits the inductive way in which questions, theory and findings were generated through this project. It allowed periods for my immersion with my data, when I could reflect and theorise the data with the opportunity to return to the field in order to put these theories to the test.

I consider ethnography to have a high degree of consistency with the research questions I set out to answer, and my ethnography successfully answers these questions. However, there are some things I might do differently if undertaking a similar research project in future.

The decision to undertake group interviews with the children may have worked to prevent some children from talking about sensitive issues which they may not have felt comfortable discussing in the company of their peers. Whilst there is no direct evidence of this in the data, it must at least be considered as a possibility. In terms of addressing issues of silence, and sensitive issues such as crying, where the

influence of the group may have curtailed potential responses, individual one to one interviews with the children may have served me better. Individual interviews, however, introduce other issues - such as the accentuation of the adult-child power relationship (Mayall, 2004) and the possibility of courting malicious allegations against the researcher. Balancing these factors, I would use the same group interviews again in similar conditions

In ideal circumstances I might have interviewed more adults. This may have enabled me to develop a greater degree of corroboration between what the adults and children were telling me. It would also have generated lots more data, difficult to cope with in the parameters set for the PhD study. As it is, I feel I had enough data to work with and feel confident in the findings I have been able to generate from them.

My decision not to interview LA or centre staff had implications for the scope of the findings. In the context of my research questions and the temporal parameters imposed on the thesis by University regulations, I feel my decision is justified. On another occasion I would certainly like to follow up the data and findings in the thesis with more discussion about sensitive issues raised. For example, what was the political background to recent changes in funding support from the LA? What are the tensions between the pragmatic decisions taken by the LA, the need for the centre to attract schools to fill its numbers, and the ethos of the centre? Do the schooling practices adopted by the centre synergise with the professional values of all those working there?

6.2. Recommendations for policy and practice.

I now move on to consider the specific areas of my thesis that policy makers may wish to respond to. However, I am under no illusions of the degree of success that may be anticipated here. For accepting even my modest argument, that discursive positioning, as a lens on learning, is at least as useful as others, and possibly more useful in making sense of the reported changes in my data, demands first the acceptance of a large number of difficult concepts. These include the post-structuralist notion of the (contested) power of discourse; the social-constructionist notion of constituted identity formed through discursive positioning; Davies and Harré's ideas of individual agency within a broadly social-constructionist view (Davies, 1990, 2004; Davies and Harré, 1990), and (not least) that accepted, common sense (Hager and Hodkinson, 2009) notions of learning as acquisition and transfer may be flawed.

Retaining the distinctiveness of outdoor education.

Taylor, *et al.*, (2010) found that the financial impact on LA outdoor learning facilities has led to a number of changes in centre practices. They report on two trends that, they argue, should be of concern to policy makers:-

- First, the uncertain nature of the funding for LA centres is likely to reduce the opportunities for children to engage in outdoor learning.
- Second, the shift towards a market led funding model has necessitated diversification for centres. Diversification could threaten the quality of educational provision available, as it may be accomplished at the expense of "....offering well planned, curricula-focussed and classroom-linked activities," (Taylor, *et al.*, 2010, p. 1035)

Whilst having no argument with the first trend reported, my study of Wild Country Hall contradicts Taylor, *et al.*'s second reported trend. Far from diversifying, if that is taken to mean moving away from school-like practices, the staff at Wild Country Hall appear to have adopted the opposite course of action. Staff members have made the centre increasingly like a school. It is not possible to know whether Wild Country Hall's response to financial and neo-Liberal pressures is unique

My research illuminates practice at Wild Country Hall by providing a new lens through which it may be viewed. It is important to enable practitioners to re-consider what they are doing by looking at it from different perspectives, which may serve to aid practitioner reflection. With this in mind, I intend to write a short Executive Summary of my findings for Anyshire LA and Wild Country Hall. In this report, and in respect of classroom/schooling discourses, I will suggest -

- The staff at Wild Country Hall might reconsider the use of long, sedentary plenary sessions in their delivery of Health and Safety advice and the Learning Goals to children. In Chapter 5 I used data to show that participating schools may be using Wild Country Hall in spite of, rather than because of, these practices. This is further evidence for the rejection of these practices.
- That the adoption of schooling discourses by Wild Country Hall, and by association by other outdoor centres, may be unproductive, and such developments might usefully be resisted, or at least moderated and deferred until further research findings become available.
- Wild Country Hall, and by association, other outdoor centres, and outdoor programmes, may be described as 'working well' because they are different to schools. Therefore, perhaps a refocus away from classroom discourse and

onto fun, adventure and excitement could be considered. Local Authorities have degrees of agency in this area, whilst non-governmental organisations can act as pressure groups.

In Chapter 3 I fore-grounded the evidence that some third sector organisations such as the Scouts (Scouts, 2010) and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE, 2010) may be in danger of compromising the important work they do in taking young people outdoors, by imitating schooling discourses:-

- Policy makers in private and third sector organisations should resist the temptation of imitating schooling discourses when developing their programmes and pedagogy. Rather, they should perceive their efficacy in terms of their difference to schools.

6.3 Recommendation for future research.

As I discussed and explained in Chapter 4, the logistical (walking and talking with participants; joining in with the canoeing, surfing and beach survival activities) and topographical (the dark; cold, wet, windy weather; steep inclines and uneven underfoot surfaces) nature of my ethnographic research necessitated some degree of dependence upon memory. Whilst initially less than comfortable with this situation, subsequent reflections moved me to recognise the pragmatic and epistemological justifications for making use of memory.

- More methodological work could be done on memory and data aimed at further legitimising the use of researcher's memories in ethnographic work in sites where contemporaneous notation and digital recording are difficult. This

is especially needed as research using mobile methods (e.g. Moles, 2010), and research in challenging physical situations, gains popularity

Thomas, *et al* (2009) suggest that there has hitherto been a shortage of research in adventure, experiential and outdoor learning that takes account of, and builds upon, previous research; whilst Rickinson, *et al* (2004) bemoan the absence of attention to theory in outdoor research. One of the strengths of my work lies in addressing both of these deficiencies. More research is now needed that builds upon my work. For example;

- My suggestion of the perspective, or lens, on learning as discursive positioning needs to be tested in both similar (i.e. outdoor centres) and different (i.e. other outdoor programmes; other learning contexts) and thereby benefit from the critique of others. Now is an opportune time for such work, for it may be that my suggestion of the lens on learning as discursive positioning could be tested alongside Brown's (2010) recent problematisation of acquisitional and transfer models in outdoor learning.
- I have discussed the problematic notion of agency. More work needs to be done on agency in the context of discursive positioning. This may be purely theoretical work, but might usefully be research based work through future case studies.
- My critique of the pedagogic practices of Wild Country Hall, the long plenary sessions and the learning goals, need to be examined in the context of other centres, centres in the public, private and third sectors. Is this pedagogical approach a particular feature of Wild Country Hall, or is it a more generally widespread phenomenon? Not knowing the answer to this question is a

weakness of a small scale ethnographic study of one centre, and could be addressed through the adoption of a different methodology.

- Another weakness of my study is my decision not to interview the head of Wild Country Hall, nor representatives of the Anyshire LA. Whilst this decision was made for robust reasons (because of my concentration of the experiences of, and effects on, children) it undoubtedly deprived these people of a voice in the research. Future research could address this weakness by interviewing centre and LA staff on the reasons underpinning their pedagogic and organisational practices.
- I have challenged the existing focus on skills learning through acquisition in outdoor learning. Especially, I have posited that the notion of the acquisition or development of 'social-skills', such as self-esteem, self-efficacy and the like, through facing and overcoming challenge may be flawed. The assumption that challenging experiences in the outdoors are inherently good, at least the simple assumption that all children respond equally to them, should be investigated by researchers to inform policy makers.
- A weakness of this study relates to the time scale. This meant it was not possible to return to participants after the elapse of some years in order to conduct follow up research and thus make some comment on the longevity of the positioning that appears to have taken place in the short term. Dierking and Falk (1997), Hattie, *et al.* (1997) and Telford (2010) have claimed that outdoor learning programmes have a greater and more long-lasting effect than classroom learning, and Nundy (1998, 1999) has made similar claims in a more restricted curricular area. It may be that participation in residential outdoor education centres has a lasting effect on those who take part, and

research that further investigates such a possibility would be welcome. Most of the children who visited Wild Country Hall during the period of my study are still at secondary school and access to them could be possible making a future follow up study a possibility. This may replicate the recent work of Telford (2010) who carried out research on 110 people who had attended the Ardentinnny Centre between 1973 and 1996 in order to investigate the long-term meanings and values that they attributed to residential outdoor education experiences.

An underlying belief of many outdoor centres, and a feature of numerous outdoor programmes, is that by overcoming challenges, young people will develop their self-concept (e.g. Ewert, 1983, Gibbs and Bunyan, 1997, Swarbrick, *et al* , 2004). This idea is rooted in the history of outdoor activity in the UK (Baden-Powell, 1930, Flavin, 1996, Mortlock, 1984, 2002), but has more recently been critiqued (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b). Loynes (1996) has criticised the development of a standard, dependable outdoor 'product' in which challenges and rushes of adrenalin can be guaranteed. However, my data indicate that some children 'fail' at some of the demands placed on them, be they the demands of 'risky' physical activities, or social demands. I have tried to reflect a number of occasions of such failure through the character of 'Josh' in my data rich narrative.

I am not suggesting that these failures inflict damage on children in either the long or short term. Yet these findings do trouble the assumption that all children respond equally to these kinds of experiences and that these experiences are inherently good. In the long run, outdoor adventure experiences, and the experience of

homesickness, may be beneficial for many children, but the issues here are perhaps more complex and less straightforward than much previous research into outdoor learning has supposed. In the light of this I suggest:-

- The assumption that challenging experiences in the outdoors are inherently good, at least the simple assumption that all children respond equally to them, should be further investigated by research in order to inform policy and practice.

6.4 End of the *rite de passage*.

I chose to begin each chapter of my thesis, my rite of passage (Bourdieu, 1977, Rabinow, 2007), with quotations, words that I have found simultaneously useful, stimulating, confusing and challenging. I can now think of no finer way of ending my thesis, than with a quotation

I thought, perhaps naturally, of the endings of books I have read. Influenced by the knowledge that others have drawn on the 'journeying metaphor' (e.g. Kvale, 1996) when writing about research, I decided there were no endings more fitting than the following by travel writer Paul Theroux. He seems to articulate an astute synergy and empathy with latter-day, part time, doctoral students, those who write on trains, on dining room tables, and at pooled computers in Plymouth University's Babbage Centre amongst other (non)places, (Augé, 2008) and who are interrupted by a multitude of accidents, slips and spillages (both metaphoric and literal). Theroux captures very well the delight of finishing a task begun many summers ago, tempered by the certain knowledge that the author will immediately turn to re-reading what s/he has constructed.-

"Gladly, made nimble by sanity's seamless glee, I boarded the train for London – correction: I am now leaving Harwich (there were often twenty miles between clauses and a hundred more before I finished a sentence). On my lap I have four thick notebooks. One has a Madras water stain on it, another has been slopped with *borscht*. These stains are like notations. The trip has finished and so is the book, and in a moment I will turn to the first page. ."

(Theroux, 1975, p. 379)

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Appendices².

Appendix 1 Research ethics clearance forms.

A) University of Plymouth research ethics form.

Ethics protocol

Background, Purpose, Objectives

This research began in 2004 at Buckingham Chilterns University College (where I was a research student) and Oxford Brookes University (where I worked as a lecturer) The data collection is taking place at a residential outdoor education centre and in schools. The purpose is to gain an understanding of children's experiences at the centre, and effects of the experience

Research Methodology

The research was being carried out using ethnographic methodology Data is collected by

Examination of archive documents

Direct observation of human participants

Naturally occurring conversations with all participants

Un-structured group discussions with children

Semi-structured interviews with school staff and parents

Data collection began in April 2004 and is expected to continue until July 2006 Each period of direct observation takes place at the centre for a week (Monday – Friday). four such periods have been undertaken (April 2004, November 2004, February 2005 and April 2005) and 2 further periods are scheduled for June 2006 and April 2007 Semi-structured group discussions (story writing workshops) are conducted in schools following the residential at the centre. These are scheduled for May and July 2006 Each workshop takes about half an hour. The semi-structured interviews with adults take about half an hour and are also conducted following the residential, interviews with parents took place in July 2005, the other interviews are intended to take place in 2006

The research involves semi-structured group discussions with children and so there are no written questions I lead these by reading stories constructed by me following the residential. The research involves semi-structured interviews with adults and stem questions are attached There are no written observation criteria, checklists or *pro-formas* that I intend to use

Rationale for the chosen sample size.

² Any spelling mistakes or grammatical errors in these appendices were also in the original materials cited and have therefore been preserved

Residential centres. One was chosen. The research is a case study of experiences in one centre.

Schools. four schools were selected to provide a sample that reflects the types of school typically using the residential centre: all primary; 2 large, 2 small; one urban, one sub-urban, 2 rural; 3 LEA maintained, one voluntary church aided.

Participants

Children.

The child participants are pupils at the participating schools who have elected to attend the residential. It must be emphasised that these children are attending the residential and participating in the activities quite apart from the research, (this becomes more important below, when considering risks.) They range in age from eight to eleven. No selection was made by me. The schools construct groups of around thirty children to attend the residential centre, using methods that differ from school to school.

Adults.

A School staff. A head teacher and a classroom assistant were selected to provide balance. The head of the schools was self selecting, the others were selected on the basis of opportunity.

B Parents. A self-selecting, convenience sample of 2 parents was interviewed. I spoke to them at a parent's evening and they offered to provide an interview. They were interviewed in July 2005.

The particular ethical issues arising out of the nature of my participant group relate to adults and children in different ways.

Adults. Taking time from busy professionals is an ethical issue. I have endeavoured to keep the interview time to a minimum; half an hour. There is also administrative time that involvement in the research project necessitates; opening letters, reading and responding to letters, email, telephone calls of a logistical and administrative nature. I have tried to keep these to a minimum. Whilst at the centre I am resident, and consume food. In the earlier stages of the research Oxford Brookes University were able to pay the centre for my accommodation. I have asked the Faculty Research Committee for funding to reimburse the centre for my accommodation and this has been approved.

Children. Again there is the issue of time, especially in that the group interviews take place in lesson time and when the children are with me they are not at their lessons. I try to keep interview time to a minimum; half an hour. There is also time at the centre. I feel it would be un-ethical to deny any participant access to activities at the centre by interviewing them, therefore I choose naturally occurring conversations as a data collection tool when at the centre.

As this is a residential centre I was asked by the head of centre to undergo a check by the Criminal Records Bureau. This was done in 2004. I do not go into children's dormitories. I do not allow myself to be alone with any of the children.

Recruitment

First, a list of schools due to attend the centre was provided by the head of centre. I wrote to the head teachers inviting them to participate, (see appendix 2A). I then selected four schools. Letters were sent to participating schools and to those who were not selected (appendix 2B).

Next, I visited the schools and spoke to the teacher in charge of the residential visit (where this was not the head) and other staff who would be involved. I outlined the project and advised them of the voluntary nature of their involvement.

Then I attended a parents' evening to outline the project to them in a similar way.

Finally, I spoke to the children and outlined the project to them.

At this time I also obtained informed consent (appendix 2 C-F).

Benefits and Risks

1 Benefits

The children and staff benefit from my periods of residence and participation at Wild Country Hall by having an extra adult, qualified teacher and first aider available. Knowledge of children's experience may be beneficial to school teachers and may inform the outdoor centre. I visit some schools after the centre based part of the research and work together with groups of children sharing stories about their experiences. There may be some benefits to children in reflecting upon their experiences in this way, and in having the attention of an adult educator in small groups. I have spoken to head teachers about the amount of time it may be appropriate to spend doing this in class and have agreed mutually beneficial time periods.

2 Risks

There are no anticipated risks to participants. In asserting this, I am making a clear distinction between those risks associated with participation in the adventurous activities at this residential centre, necessitating much road travel; and any additional risks associated with taking part in this research project. Additionally, I emphasise that the participants are not engaging in the activities or residential in order to participate in the research, rather, they are undertaking the residential and activities apart from the research.

3 There are a number of risks to me as researcher in conducting this research project. I see risk as the product of probability and severity of harm.

i) I am spending time in a residential centre with children I do not know. There is a low probability that a child may falsely accuse me of abuse. This could result in serious harm to me. The risk is medium. I have had a CRB check done which establishes my previous criminal record. I have talked to the head of centre and head teacher about this and am fully aware of the protocols in place such as not going into children's rooms, not being alone with children and not touching children when helping them to put on equipment.

ii) There is a low probability that a child might disclose to me abuse that has taken place at the centre, at school or at home. If I did not know how to act on such disclosure this could result in some harm to both me and the child. The risk is medium. In order to protect myself from allegations of inappropriate behaviour in this respect I have made myself aware of centre and school protocols on reporting disclosures of this nature.

iii) Children of this age often become homesick, feel left out by others or become uneasy about the activities (though at this centre they are never *made to* participate in activities they do not wish to). Coping with all of this is part of the benefit of participation in the residential. There is a medium probability that I will be on hand when this happens, but a low probability that there will not also be a teacher there too. There is a low severity of possible harm to me if I responded inappropriately (e.g. by ignoring or by over-reacting). The risk is low. To protect myself against this low risk I consider carefully how to approach an upset child. My first course of action is to allow a teacher, or peer, or member of the centre staff to intervene if they feel it necessary. If this is not immediately practical for a very upset child, I would fetch a member of staff.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Confidentiality of identities within the participants.

All of the participating schools know which other schools are also participating. This decision was made early on, with the agreement of each participating head teacher. Parents also know that other schools are participating. If they ask for the names of these schools, this is divulged, consent again having been given by the head teachers.

The names of children are known only to parents, other children, the staff of their school and the centre staff.

In the group interview situations I cannot control what the children might say about each other. I begin these interviews by reading a fictional narrative about events on the residential and encourage the children to talk about the fictional characters.

When I transcribe the interviews I use pseudonyms in place of any children identified by participants on the tape

Data

Collected data (field notes and tape recordings, transcripts) are kept securely at my home are not available to anybody but myself and my supervisors. The data will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research, once any writing that emanates from it has been completed

Writing (reports, papers, thesis)

Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the centre and the schools. No participants are referred to in the findings, fictionalised characters are constructed from the data which further protect identities.

Deception/Covert Action

N/A

Compensation

N/A

Conflicts of Interest

N/A

10. Informed Consent Process

Informed consent was sought previously under the supervision of Buckingham Chilterns University College following the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee's protocol. Since my move to the University of Plymouth another school needs to give consent and I have re-worded the paperwork to reflect this. Informed consent was sought independently from:

Children, Parents (see appendix 2C), Head teachers, The head of centre (see appendix 2D) Adult participants (see appendix 2E).

I visited the head of centre in February 2004 and talked through the project with him. I gave him a letter explaining the project and obtained his signature on a consent form. I repeated this on movement to Plymouth as the supervisory team had changed, (see appendix 2D)

Heads of schools were visited in the period March 2004 to December 2004. One school has yet to give formal consent and I will visit them in May 2006. I talked through and explained the project to the head teachers.

I spoke to the parents at each school at a parents' evening. I talked through and explained the project to them. I gave them a letter explaining the project and obtained their signature on a consent form (see appendix 2C). This asks for separate

consent for their child participating in both parts of the project. When parents were not present at the parents evening I had to rely on the school distributing the letter and collecting the consent form for me. A tiny minority of parents refused to give their consent to their children taking part in the research. These children were not, and will not form, part of the groups for writing workshop discussions. These parents did not express any difficulty about my presence during the residential and associated activities which I take as agreement to group observations. Excluding any children from observations of the whole cohort is extremely difficult. If the children whose parents have not given permission for inclusion in the research approach me during the centre visit and want to talk to me I will not refuse to communicate with them, which may be seen as ostracising them. I will talk to these children but will not record this in any way or regard it as data.

I spoke to the children outlining my research and informing them of their rights as volunteer participants who could withdraw at any time from the process, either in part or in whole, without suffering disadvantages.

I did not seek written consent from the children. I consider this an adult approach to informed consent and sought other means of achieving this. I see that in research with adults participants receive a copy of the consent form with the researchers contact details. This can be an important part of allowing participants to withdraw – and to reassure them. However, many parents did not keep their part of the information sheet I gave them, returning it instead with the consent form. This tells me they saw it as un-important to them, perhaps because they were not to be the participants. Also, some people, adults and children, loose pieces of paper. Of course, I value informed consent and so sought to achieve this in a way dependent on openness and trust.

I addressed whole groups of children at school. I spoke to them in language that I think they could fully understand; talking about my project and identifying them as important volunteers in that project. I talked about their rights to withdraw without detriment. I answered their questions about the project. I will repeat this process and, in future, will give children a paper summary of what I have said (appendix 2F). At the centre I reminded the children that I was there doing a project and that it was OK for them to refuse to have me watching them or not to talk to me. In the event of a child not wishing to be watched I was ready to move to observe another group, (though in four visits to the centre this has not yet happened). When observing children at the scribble sheets, I ask specifically for permission to read what they have written and use if for my research?

It could be argued that the power relationship between myself as an adult and children may make it difficult for them to withdraw. The only way I can seek to reduce this possibility is to be as open and honest as possible and seek to remind and reassure child participants of their position and rights.

I approached adult participants individually and gave them a letter explaining the project and obtained their signature on a consent form (see appendix 2E) This consent refers to their individual participation

B) Oxford Brookes University research ethics form.
Oxford Brookes University
University Research Ethics Committee Form 1(b)

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF A PROJECT INVOLVING HUMAN
PARTICIPANTS, DATA OR MATERIAL

Registration No. (office use only) ☐☐☐☐☐☐

Period of Approval (office use only)/...../..... to/...../.....

This application form is to be used by researchers seeking approval from the
University Research Ethics Committee.

The original and 15 copies of your completed application must be submitted to the
Committee by the due date. *Applications must be completed on the form; answers
in the form of attachments will not be accepted, except where indicated. No
handwritten applications will be accepted.* Research must not commence until
written approval has been received from the Committee.

PROJECT TITLE:

THIS PROJECT
IS:

(tick as many as
apply)

- ☐ Staff Research Project
- ☐ Research Student Project
- ☐ Project by External Researcher
(please give details)
 - ☐ Project by member of staff at another institution
(please give details of Post and Institution, including
address)
 - ☐ MPhil/PhD student at another institution
(please give details of Department and Institution,
including address)

- ☐ Masters student at another institution
(please give details of Department and Institution,
including address)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S) Supervisors and co-supervisors of student projects are Principal Investigators PhD and Doctoral students can be listed as Principal Investigator along with their supervisors

TITLE	FIRST NAME	SURNAME	SCHOOL	PHONE	FAX	EMAIL

OTHER INVESTIGATORS:

TITLE	FIRST NAME	SURNAME	SCHOOL	PHONE	FAX	EMAIL

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT/CENTRE/DIRECTORATE

DECLARATION BY INVESTIGATORS

The information contained herein is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate. I have read the University's Code of Practice for Ethical Standards for Research Involving Human Participants, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached application in accordance with the guidelines, the University's Code of Practice and any other condition laid down by Oxford Brookes University's Research Ethics Committee. I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting this research and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants

I and my co-investigators or supporting staff have the appropriate qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached application and to deal with any emergencies and contingencies related to the research that may arise

Signature(s).

Principal investigator(s)

Date

... / ... / ...

Print name(s) of Principal Investigator(s) in block
letters

DECLARATION BY SCHOOL RESEARCH ETHICS OFFICER (SREO)

DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED:/...../.....

DATE ETHICS REVIEW/...../.....
COMPLETED

The School Research Ethics Committee has reviewed this project and considers the methodological/technical and ethical aspects of the proposal to be appropriate to the tasks proposed and recommends approval of the project. The School Research Ethics Committee considers that the investigator(s) has/have the necessary qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached application, and to deal with any emergencies and contingencies that may arise.

Comments/Provisos:

Signature(
s):

...../...../.....
Date

SREO

Print name in block letters

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE USE ONLY

Date application/...../.....
received:

Period of approval: From:/...../..... To:/...../.....

Comments/Provisos:

☐ see attached letter

Signature(
s)

(Chair, UREC)

.....
Date

Date PI notified:

1 PROJECT DETAILS

1.1 PROPOSED DURATION OF RESEARCH COMPONENT OF PROJECT

FROM	To
------	----

1.2 START DATE FOR DATA COLLECTION

1.3 LAY DESCRIPTION PROVIDE A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT, INCLUDING WHAT PARTICIPANTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO DO THIS DESCRIPTION MUST BE IN EVERYDAY LANGUAGE WHICH IS FREE FROM JARGON. PLEASE EXPLAIN ANY TECHNICAL TERMS OR DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC PHRASES. (NO MORE THAN 300 WORDS).

1.4 AIMS OF AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH STATE THE AIMS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT WHERE RELEVANT, STATE THE SPECIFIC HYPOTHESIS TO BE TESTED ALSO PLEASE PROVIDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT RESEARCH, A JUSTIFICATION AS TO WHY THIS RESEARCH SHOULD PROCEED AND AN EXPLANATION OF ANY EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY (NO MORE THAN 600 WORDS)

1.5 PROPOSED METHOD: *Provide an outline of the proposed method, including details of data collection techniques, tasks participants will be asked to do, the estimated time commitment involved, and how data will be analyzed. If the project includes any procedure which is beyond already established and accepted techniques please include a description of it (No more than 500 words)*

1.6 INVESTIGATORS' QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS
List the academic qualifications and outline the experience and skills relevant to this project that the researchers and any supporting staff have in carrying out the

research and in dealing with any emergencies, unexpected outcomes, or contingencies that may arise.

1.7 PLEASE EXPLAIN WHEN, HOW, WHERE, AND TO WHOM RESULTS WILL BE DISSEMINATED, INCLUDING WHETHER PARTICIPANTS WILL BE PROVIDED WITH ANY INFORMATION AS TO THE FINDINGS OR OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT

1.8 WILL THE RESEARCH BE UNDERTAKEN ONLY ON-SITE AT OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY (including all campuses)?

☐ YES ☐ NO *(If NO, give details of off-campus location, including other sites where research is being undertaken and other countries providing data.)*

1.9 OTHER APPROVALS REQUIRED *Has permission to conduct the research in, at or through another institution or organisation (e.g. a School) been obtained? Individuals proposing to conduct research involving contact with children or vulnerable adults must first get agreement from the individual with appropriate authority in the institution or organization through which the research is being conducted. (Copies of letters of approval to be provided)*

☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ NOT APPLICABLE

(If YES, please specify from whom and attach a copy. If NO, please explain when this will be obtained.)

1.10 IS THIS PROTOCOL BEING SUBMITTED TO ANOTHER ETHICS COMMITTEE, OR HAS IT BEEN PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED TO AN ETHICS COMMITTEE? *This includes an NHS Local Research Ethics Committee or any other institutional committee of collaborating partners or research sites.*

☐ YES ☐ NO *(If YES, please provide details.)*

2. PARTICIPANT DETAILS

2.1 DOES THE RESEARCH SPECIFICALLY TARGET (TICK AS MANY AS APPLICABLE)

	YES	NO
a) students or staff of this University	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) adults (over the age of 16 years and competent to give consent)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) children/legal minors (anyone under the age of 16 years)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) people from non-English speaking backgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) anyone who has a physical disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) patients or clients of professionals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) anyone who is in custody, custodial care, or for whom a court have assumed responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) any other person whose capacity to consent may be compromised	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) a member of an organisation where another individual may also need to give consent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.2 NUMBER, AGE RANGE AND SOURCE OF PARTICIPANTS

Provide number, age range and source of participants. Please provide a justification of your proposed sample size (including details of statistical power of the sample, where appropriate)

2.3 MEANS BY WHICH PARTICIPANTS ARE TO BE RECRUITED

Please provide specific details as to how you will be recruiting participants. How will people be told you are doing this research? How will they be approached and asked if they are willing to participate? If you are mailing to or phoning people, please explain how you have obtained or will obtain their names and contact details. This information will need to be included in the participant information sheet. If a recruitment advertisement is to be used, please ensure you attach a copy to this application

2.4 WILL PARTS OF THIS PROJECT BE CARRIED OUT BY INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS?

- ☐ YES ☐ NO If YES, please confirm that the independent contractor will receive from the first named Principal Investigator, a copy of the approved ethics protocol and be made aware of their responsibilities arising from it. [The responsibility for effective oversight and proper conduct of the project

remains with the Principal Investigator(s)]

2.5 ARE ANY OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN A DEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP WITH ANY OF THE INVESTIGATORS, PARTICULARLY THOSE INVOLVED IN RECRUITING FOR OR CONDUCTING THE PROJECT?

Research involving persons in dependent or unequal relationships (for instance, teacher/student) may compromise a participant's ability to give consent which is free from any form of pressure (real or implied) arising from this unequal power relationship. Therefore, UREC recommends that, where possible, researchers choose participant cohorts where no dependent relationship exists. If, after due consideration, the investigator believes that research involving people in dependent relationships is purposeful and methodologically defensible, then UREC will require additional information explaining why subjects in a dependent relationship are essential to the proposed research, and how risks inherent in the dependent and unequal relationship will be managed. They will also need to be reassured that refusal to participate will not result in any discrimination or penalty. NB. Reasons of convenience will not normally be considered adequate justification for conducting research in situations where dependent relationships exist.

☐ YES ☐ NO *(If YES, please explain the relationship and the steps to be taken by the investigators to ensure that the participant's participation is purely voluntary and not influenced by the relationship in any way. – including teacher/student, student/lecturer, doctor/patient, employer/employee.)*

2.6 PAYMENT OR INCENTIVES OFFERED TO PARTICIPANTS

Do you propose to pay or reward participants?

☐ YES ☐ NO *(If YES, how, how much and for what purpose?)*

3. RISK AND RISK MANAGEMENT

3.1 DOES THE RESEARCH INVOLVE:

YES N
O

use of a questionnaire? (attach copy)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
interviews (attach interview questions)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
participant observation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
observation of participants without their knowledge?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
audio- or video-taping interviewees or events?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
access to personal and/or confidential data (including student, patient or client data) without the participant's specific consent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
administration of any questions, tasks, investigations, procedures or stimuli which may be experienced by participants as physically or mentally painful, stressful or unpleasant during or after the research process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
performance of any acts which might diminish the self-esteem of participants or cause them to experience embarrassment, regret or depression?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
procedures that involve deception of participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
administration of any substance or agent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
use of non-treatment of placebo control conditions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
collection of body tissues or fluid samples?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
collection and/or testing of DNA samples?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
collection and/or testing of gametes or embryo tissue?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
participation in a clinical trial?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
administration of ionising radiation to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.2 POTENTIAL RISK TO PARTICIPANTS AND RISK MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

Identify, as far as possible, all potential risks to participants (e.g. physical, psychological, social, legal or economic etc.), associated with the proposed research. Please explain what risk management procedures will be put in place.

3.3 ARE THERE LIKELY TO BE ANY BENEFITS (DIRECT OR INDIRECT) TO PARTICIPANTS FROM THIS RESEARCH?

☐ YES ☐ NO (If YES, provide details)

3.4 ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC RISKS TO RESEARCHERS? (where research is undertaken at an off-campus location researchers will need to consult the University guidelines and their School regarding risk assessment.)

☐ YES ☐ NO (If YES, please describe.)

3.5 ADVERSE / UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES

Please describe what measures you have in place in the event that there are any unexpected outcomes or adverse effects to participants arising from involvement in the project.

3.6 MONITORING

Please explain how the researchers propose to monitor the conduct of the project (especially where several people are involved in recruiting or interviewing, administering procedures) to ensure that it conforms with the procedures set out in this application, the University's Code of Practice and any guidelines published by their professional association.

IF THE RISKS YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED IN YOUR PROJECT ARE NOT MORE THAN THOSE ENCOUNTERED IN EVERYDAY LIFE, YOU MAY NOT NEED TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS 3.7 TO 3.9

3.7 PLEASE EXPLAIN HOW THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO THE PARTICIPANT OR THE COMMUNITY OUTWEIGH THE RISKS?

3.8 SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPANTS

Depending on risks to participants you may need to consider having additional support for participants during/after the study. Consider whether your project would require additional support, e.g., external counselling available to participants. Please advise what support will be available.

3.9 DEBRIEFING

What debriefing will participants receive following the study and when? (Attach a copy of any written material or statement to be used in such a debriefing, if applicable). Participants may need to talk about the experience of being involved in the study with the researchers, as well as learn more about the aims of the research.

4 INFORMED CONSENT

4.1 HAVE YOU ATTACHED TO YOUR APPLICATION A COPY OF THE PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET? *(Guidelines for drafting this are provided on the UREC web page. Whenever possible, Oxford Brookes University letterhead should be used for information sheets.)*

☐ YES ☐ NO *(If NO, please explain)*

DOES THE STATEMENT INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

	YES	NOT APPLICABLE
clear identification of the University, the Department(s) involved, the project title, the Principal and Other Investigators (including contact details)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
details of what involvement in the project will require (e.g , involvement in interviews, completion of questionnaire, audio/video-taping of events), estimated time commitment, any risks involved	<input type="checkbox"/>	
advice that the project has received clearance by the UREC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
if the sample size is small, advice to participants that this may have implications for privacy/anonymity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a clear statement that if participants are in a dependent relationship with any of the researchers that involvement in the project will not affect ongoing assessment/grades/management or treatment of health (as relevant)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied	<input type="checkbox"/>	
advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
advice as to whether or not data are to be stored for a minimum period	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
advice that if participants have any concerns about the conduct of this research project that they can contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee at	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Oxford Brookes University,
any other relevant information

☐ ☐

4.2 HAVE YOU ATTACHED TO YOUR APPLICATION A COPY OF THE
CONSENT FORM? - if you are not obtaining consent in writing please explain how
the informed consent process is to be documented. (Guidelines for drafting a
consent form are provided on the UREC web page. Whenever possible, Oxford
Brookes University letterhead should be used for consent forms.)

☐

YES

☐

NO

(If NO, please explain how you consent will be
documented.)

DOES THE CONSENT FORM INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

	YES	NO	NOT APPLICABLE
will it be printed on Oxford Brookes University letterhead	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
title of the project and names of investigators	<input type="checkbox"/>		
confirmation that the project is for research	<input type="checkbox"/>		
confirmation that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied	<input type="checkbox"/>		
confirmation of particular requirements of participants, including for example whether interviews are to be audio- /video-taped	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
advice of legal limitations to data confidentiality	<input type="checkbox"/>		
if the sample size is small, confirmation that this may have implications for anonymity	<input type="checkbox"/>		
any other relevant information	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

5. CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

5.1 WILL THE RESEARCH INVOLVE:

	YES	NO
complete anonymity of participants (i.e., researchers will not know the identity of participants as participants are part of a random sample and are required to return responses with no form of personal identification)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
anonimised samples or data (i.e., an irreversible process whereby identifiers are removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers. It is then impossible to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates)?
 de-identified samples or data (i.e., a reversible process in which the
 identifiers are removed and replaced by a code. Those handling the data
 subsequently do so using the code. If necessary, it is possible to link the
 code to the original identifiers and identify the individual to whom the
 sample or information relates)? ☐ ☐
- participants having the option of being identified in any publication arising
 from the research? ☐ ☐
- participants being referred to by pseudonym in any publication arising from
 the research? ☐ ☐
- the use of personal data? (If YES, you may need to register with the
 University) ☐ ☐
- any other method of protecting the privacy of participants? Please
 describe.

*Please bear in mind that where the sample size is very small, it may be impossible to
 guarantee anonymity/confidentiality of participant identity. Participants involved in
 such projects need to be advised of this limitation*

**5.2 WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING METHODS OF ASSURING
 CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA WILL BE IMPLEMENTED? PLEASE SELECT ALL
 RELEVANT OPTIONS**

- data and codes and all identifying information to be kept in separate locked filing ☐
 cabinets
- access to computer files to be available by password only ☐
- other (please describe) ☐

5.3 LEGAL LIMITATIONS TO DATA CONFIDENTIALITY: *Participants need to
 be aware that confidentiality of information provided can only be protected within the
 limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom
 of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions. Depending on the
 research proposal you may need to specifically state these limitations. Have you
 included appropriate information in the plain language statement and consent form?*

- ☐ YES ☐ NO (If NO, please advise how participants will be advised
 .)

6 DATA STORAGE, SECURITY AND DISPOSAL

6.1 DOES DATA STORAGE COMPLY WITH THE UNIVERSITY'S GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF RESEARCH DATA AND RECORDS ? (See Oxford Brookes University Code of Practice for Academic Integrity, at: <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/regulations/regulations/index.html>)

☐ YES ☐ NO (If NO, please explain.)

6.2 WILL THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SECURITY OF DATA COLLECTED?

☐ YES ☐ NO (If NO, please provide further details. You may also use this space to explain any differences between arrangements in the field, and on return to campus.)

6.3 WILL DATA BE KEPT IN LOCKED FACILITIES IN THE SCHOOL THROUGH WHICH THE PROJECT IS BEING CONDUCTED?

☐ YES ☐ NO (If NO, please explain how and where data will be held, including any arrangements for data security during fieldwork.)

ACCESS TO DATA

- ☐ Access by named researchers only
- ☐ Access by people other than named researcher(s) (Please explain:)
- ☐ Other (Please explain:)

- ☐ Stored at Oxford Brookes University
- ☐ Stored at another site (Please explain where and for what purpose:)

6.5 WILL DATA BE KEPT FOR A MINIMUM OF 5 YEARS FROM THE DATE OF PUBLICATION OF THE RESEARCH?

☐ YES ☐ NO (If NO, please explain. How long will that data be kept?)

6.6 WILL OTHERS BESIDES THE NAMED RESEARCHERS HAVE ACCESS TO THE RAW DATA?

☐ YES ☐ NO . (If YES, please explain who and for what purpose? What is their connection to the project?)

6.7 IF DATA IS TO BE DISPOSED OF PLEASE EXPLAIN HOW, WHEN AND BY WHOM THIS WILL BE DONE?

7 FUNDING

7.1 IS THIS PROJECT BEING FUNDED?

☐ YES ☐ NO (If NO, please skip the remaining questions)

7.2 SOURCE OF FUNDING?

7.3 PROJECT GRANT TITLE AND PROPOSED DURATION OF GRANT (Where applicable)

7.4 REGISTRATION NUMBER OF GRANT OR FUNDING APPLICATION (If known)

7.5 DOES THE PROJECT REQUIRE APPROVAL BEFORE CONSIDERATION FOR FUNDING BY A FUNDING AGENCY?

☐ YES ☐ NO

IF YES: DEADLINE FOR THE FUNDING AGENCY?

7.6 HOW WILL PARTICIPANTS BE INFORMED OF THE SOURCE OF THE FUNDING?

8. CHECKLIST

Please check that the following documents are attached to your application. Please note that where questionnaire or interview questions are submitted in draft form, a copy of the final documentation must be submitted for final approval when available.

	ATTACHED		NOT APPLICABLE
Recruitment advertisement (question 2.3)	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant information sheet (question 4.1)	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Consent form (question 4.2)	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence of external approvals related to the research (question 1.9)	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Questionnaire (question 3.1)	<input type="checkbox"/> draft	<input type="checkbox"/> final	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interview Schedule (question 3.1)	<input type="checkbox"/> draft	<input type="checkbox"/> final	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify:)	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

For further details about completion of this form, please contact your School Research Ethics Officer in the first instance.

UREC
18.10.02

Appendix 2 Examples of letters used to inform participants and consent forms

A) Letter seeking involvement from schools

Harcourt Hill
OXFORD
OX2 9AT

Telephone 01865 488586
Email area@brookes.ac.uk

25 May 2004

Dear Headteacher,

I am a lecturer in education at Oxford Brookes University and a PhD student at Buckingham Chilterns University College. I am researching the effects of outdoor, residential experiences on the cognitive development of children.

With the help and encouragement of Andrew Baines (outdoor education adviser, Anyshire LEA) and Pete Bromley at Wild Country Hall, I am hoping to follow the experiences of some primary school pupils whilst they are at Wild Country Hall in 2006. I am writing to ask if (A N Other) School would like to be involved in the research.

My research methods are ethnographic and primarily involve observations of the pupils' experience at Wild Country Hall, with some follow up visits to the school to talk to the children. I have already visited Wild Country Hall and Pete Bromley will be able to provide references. The Criminal Records Bureau checks have been done and you have my permission to contact Anyshire LEA to find out about this. I am very happy to meet you and discuss my research plan and answer any questions you might have.

I look forward to hearing from you if you want to be involved.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Rea

B) Example of the letter I sent to schools that wished to take part in the research, but who I could not accommodate.

Harcourt Hill
OXFORD
OX2 9AT

Telephone 01865 488586

Email area@brookes.ac.uk

21 September 2004

Dear (HEAD TEACHER),

Further to my previous letter and our discussions of my research into the effects of outdoor, residential experiences on the cognitive development of children.

I have now made firm arrangements with four local schools to visit Wild Country Hall along with them. Much as I would like to go to Wild Country Hall more often, the desk job still has to be done.

I am writing to tell you, therefore, that I will not be able to track your school at Wild Country Hall this year. Many thanks for your initial interest.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Rea

C Information sheet for parents and consent form.

Buckingham Chilterns University College, Oxford Brookes University participant information sheet and consent form

Effects of outdoor/ residential experience on children in the upper primary years

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Buckingham Chilterns University College, Oxford Brookes University

Principal Investigator

Mr Tony Rea,

Oxford Brookes University

Harcourt Hill Campus

Oxford

OX2 9AT

This is a research project investigating the academic, personal and social effects of a residential/ outdoor experience at Wild Country Hall on children in the upper primary years. I am the principal (and only) investigator and the project is part of my studies for the award of PhD by research at Buckingham Chilterns University College, Buckinghamshire. My research is being supervised by professors Barbara Humberstone and John Tribe at Buckingham Chilterns University College.

Involvement in the project will require observation of the pupil participants, group interviews with them, interviews with their teachers and the instructors at Wild Country Hall. I also wish to study the annual reports of a small sample of children and interview some parents; but will contact people separately later about this. Involvement in the project is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

To protect the confidentiality of data I will keep anonymous all references to pupils. Additionally, in any papers or publications emanating from this research, pseudonyms will be used to protect the anonymity of both Wild Country Hall and the schools involved. All data I collect are to be stored for a minimum period of 5 years, or until I complete my PhD degree.

The project has received clearance by the Oxford Brookes University Research Ethics Committee. Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project you can contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee at Oxford Brookes University, Gipsy Lane, Oxford.

Any general questions about the research should be directed to me at the above address. Please would you return the attached slip, but **keep this sheet for your information.**

Effects of outdoor/ residential experience on children in the upper primary years

CONSENT FORM

Mr Tony Rea,

Oxford Brookes University

Harcourt Hill Campus

Oxford

OX2 9AT

I understand that this is a research project, involvement in the project is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied. I give my consent for observation of the pupil participants at school and during the activities at Wild Country Hall, and group interviews with the children.

Please sign the consent form below and return this page to me via the school.

.....

.....

CONSENT FORM

I (your name) _____

give my permission for (name of child) _____

to be involved in the research project "effects of outdoor/ residential experience on children in the upper primary years," being undertaken by Mr Tony Rea. I understand that I am giving my permission for the observation of my child at school and during the activities at Wild Country Hall, interviews with the teachers and a study of annual reports. I understand that involvement in the project is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

D) Information sheets and consent form for Head of centre

The head of centre consent form

Understanding children's experiences at a residential outdoor education centre

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Principal Investigator
Mr Tony Rea,
University of Plymouth
Faculty of Education
Douglas Avenue
Exmouth
EX8 2AT

This is a research project investigating the children's experiences at the Wild Country Hall Outdoor Education Centre. I am the principal (and only) investigator and the project is part of my studies for the award of PhD by research at the University of Plymouth. My research is being supervised by Dr John Dibbo (Director of Studies), Dr Ulrike Gelder and Dr Peter Kelly at the University of Plymouth.

Involvement in the project will require observation of the pupil participants, group interviews with them, interviews with their teachers and some parents.

I will seek informed consent from all other participants.

Involvement in the project is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied

To protect the confidentiality of data I will store this securely and only my supervisors and I will have access to it. In any reports, papers and in my thesis I will keep anonymous all references to places and participants. Additionally, in any papers or publications emanating from this research, pseudonyms will be used to protect the anonymity of both Wild Country Hall and the schools involved. All data I collect are to be stored securely until I complete my PhD degree.

Any general questions about the research should be directed to me at the above address. Please would you return the attached slip, but keep this sheet for your information

Effects of outdoor/ residential experience on children in the upper primary years

CONSENT FORM

Mr Tony Rea,
University of Plymouth
Faculty of Education
Douglas Avenue
Exmouth
EX8 2AT

I understand that this is a research project, involvement in the project is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied. I give my consent for observation of the pupil participants at Wild Country Hall.

Please sign the consent form below and return this page to me via the school.

.....
.....
CONSENT FORM

I Pete Bromley, give my permission for Wild Country Hall Outdoor Education Centre to be involved in the research project "Understanding children's experiences at a residential outdoor education centre," being undertaken by Mr Tony Rea. I understand that I am giving my permission for Wild Country Hall as a site for this research. I understand that involvement in the project is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

Signed _____

Date _____

E) Information sheets and consent form: Individuals.

Individual consent form

Understanding children's experiences at a residential outdoor education centre.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Principal Investigator
Mr Tony Rea,
University of Plymouth
Faculty of Education
Douglas Avenue
Exmouth
EX8 2AT

This is a research project investigating the children's experiences at the Wild Country Hall Outdoor Education Centre. I am the principal (and only) investigator and the project is part of my studies for the award of PhD by research at the University of Plymouth. My research is being supervised by Dr John Dibbo (Director of Studies), Dr Ulrike Gelder and Dr Peter Kelly at the University of Plymouth.

Involvement in the project will require an interview which will last approximately half an hour and will be tape recorded. Involvement in the project is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

To protect the confidentiality of data I will store this securely and only my supervisors and I will have access to it. In any reports, papers and in my thesis I will keep anonymous all references to places and participants. Additionally, in any papers or publications emanating from this research, pseudonyms will be used to protect the anonymity of everybody involved. All data I collect are to be stored securely until I complete my PhD degree.

Any general questions about the research should be directed to me at the above address. Please would you return the attached slip, but **keep this sheet for your information.**

Understanding children's experiences at a residential outdoor education centre.

CONSENT FORM

Mr Tony Rea,
University of Plymouth
Faculty of Education
Douglas Avenue
Exmouth
EX8 2AT

I understand that this is a research project, involvement in the project is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied. I consent to being involved.

Please sign the consent form below and return this page to me .

.....
.....

CONSENT FORM

I (name) _____ give my permission be involved in the research project "Understanding children's experiences at a residential outdoor education centre," being undertaken by Mr Tony Rea. I understand that I am giving my permission to take part in an interview. I understand that involvement in the project is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.

Signed _____

Date _____

F) Information sheet for children

Children's information sheet.

Understanding children's experiences at a residential outdoor education centre

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Principal Investigator

Mr Tony Rea,

University of Plymouth

Faculty of Education

Douglas Avenue

Exmouth

EX8 2AT

I am doing a project investigating your experiences at the Wild Country Hall. I am the only investigator and the project is part of my studies for the award of PhD, a kind of certificate. My project is being supervised by Dr John Dibbo at the University of Plymouth.

I will be coming to Wild Country Hall with your school and will be like another adult helper there. I will be able to observe some of you doing activities, at meal times and other group times. I will not take photographs, nor video, nor tape recordings at the centre. For much of the time I will be in the background. There might be times when you want to talk to me about what you have been doing, but you do not have to and it all right not to. I will not be asking you any questions. Sometimes at the centre you will be asked by the staff there or by your teachers to do some writing. You can show this to me if you want to, but you do not have to.

Your involvement in the project is voluntary and you are free to withdraw consent at any time. Your head teacher and the head of the centre have been asked if I can do this project, and they are happy about it. Your parents have also been asked for their consent, and they might have spoken to you about the project.

After Wild Country Hall I may visit your school. If so, I will ask for some volunteers to do group work about Wild Country Hall. This will involve me reading you some stories I have written and us working together to make the stories better. I will use a tape recorder to help me to remember what you have said. If you do not want to take part you do not have to.

When I write about my project I will use false names for Wild Country Hall, the staff and children. So everything will be kept anonymous. In any publications from this research, false names will be used to disguise the identity of everybody involved. All information I collect will be stored securely until I complete my PhD degree.

Appendix 3 Extracts from data

3.1 Archive data

3.1.1 List of activities that schools can select from.

The Wild Country Hall Experience

Programme suggestions

Moorland Adventure Day

A chance for the pupils to visit one of the beautiful areas of the National Park and discover it for themselves by foot. After a hard day on the moor battling against the elements (or hopefully strolling along in the sunshine!) pupils cannot fail to develop a sense of achievement and appreciation of the natural beauty of ****, The emphasis for the day can include many of the following themes:

Physical challenge of the activity	Local History
Introduction to map and compass work	The Beast of ****
Survival techniques	The story of ****
Geography/ geology of the area	Science Study

Wet 'n' Wild Adventure Day

Ahoy There Me Hearties!! – The chance to take part in the exciting activity of canoeing whilst completing our Pirate Challenge. Once the pupils have acquired the relevant skills required to construct and paddle their raft they take charge of their own day at **** reservoir. By lashing two canoes together an extremely stable raft is made with no chance of capsizing allowing the pupils to concentrate on the task in hand.

The emphasis for the day is on teamwork, co-operation and communication through having to navigate their raft around the Pirate course using the Treasure Map. Various challenges must be completed in order to collect all their 'booty' and then the frantic sail race for Treasure Island begins.

A fun filled adventure, which often ends in a spectacular water fight!

Additional charge of £2.00 per child for safety boat cover at the reservoir

Travel time to reservoir 30 mins

Surfing Day

Could be a once in a lifetime opportunity to try this exhilarating sport and it shouldn't be missed. The experience of catching your first wave is one never to be forgotten. The safe, sandy beaches of **** provide an ideal place for children to learn to surf.

The children will be encouraged to overcome their fears and challenge their preconceptions about the sport and the sea environment. There is a large emphasis on taking responsibility for themselves, others and their equipment.

All specialist equipment, including 5mm one piece wetsuits, booties and hats are provided. (This activity takes place in waist high water and consequently is suitable even for weak swimmers.)

Seasonal – Usually after Easter until October Half term

Additional charge - Parking £2.50 to £5.00 Per minibus

Travel time to **** beach 50 mins

Cliff Adventure Day

The pupils are led on a journey exploring many aspects of the coastal environment. They will discover exciting facts about this diverse environment at the same time as uncovering new feelings about themselves and their classmates. A rare opportunity to get close to this dynamic and fascinating environment.

An excellent day, which is always enjoyed by all pupils, as there is something for everyone. Activities that may form part of the day are:

- Rock Climbing
- Rock pooling
- Beach sculptures
- Coasteering

There should be the opportunity to take part in most of the activities but this is dependent on the state of the tide and the weather conditions.

- Rock Climbing

Pupils are introduced to rock climbing in a real but controlled environment and will learn to combine personal awareness skills with technical skills of climbing e.g. determination, responsibility for each other and rope work. There is a strong emphasis on teamwork and pupils will develop their teambuilding skills during the activity concentrating on communication, encouragement and trust as they learn how to protect the climber through belaying. In this supportive environment there is the opportunity for every child to achieve at their own level.

- Coasteering

An exciting way of exploring the rocky shores of the area. Pupils will scramble over, through, under and around the uneven terrain in a 'follow me leader' style fashion. The emphasis is on personal challenge, helping others, communication and promoting the spirit of exploration, whilst at the same time learning more about the rocky shore environment.

There is the possibility that this could be a 'wet' activity depending on the state of the tide.

- Rock pool Study

A fantastic opportunity to explore the rock pools of the foreshore and discover this unique habitat first hand. Armed with collecting bowls and identification sheets pupils are given time to trawl the rock pools and enjoy the delights for themselves. A firm favourite this activity can be done at a variety of different levels to suit your requirements.

- What animals/ plants can we find today?
- What animals/plants do we find in different zones?
- How have species adapted to their environments?
- Quantitative studies using quadrants and transects.

There is the opportunity to study the animals and plants more closely in our marine aquarium at the centre.

- Beach Sculptures

Pupils (and adults!) of any age enjoy the challenge of our beach sculpture competitions. Let your imagination run wild drawing inspiration from the beautiful surroundings and endless resources from the beach. No talent required just willingness to have a go, pupils are encouraged to sculpt whatever they fancy and invent a story to accompany their sculpture with some extraordinary results. Andrew Goldsworthy eat your heart out!!

Exploration

A multi-faceted day which can be tailored to meet your requirements. A beautiful walk (or scramble through the rhododendrons!) from Wild Country Hall Lodge down to the beach through the beautiful Victorian **** Estate. Once on the isolated pebble beach you are unlikely to meet another soul and the day becomes a survival adventure as the pupils design and construct a shelter and cook bread over an open fire. Making your way back up to Wild Country Hall is a steep ascent but hardly noticeable as the day turns into an enjoyable scramble up the stream bed with hardly a dry wellie in sight!

Themes which can be explored include

Victorian history	Shelter building
Hill farm study	Stream walking
Waterfall climbing	Geology, coastal landforms
Fire making and camp style cooking	

Valley walk and Flood Disaster Study

A stunning walk which can take a whole day starting from Wild Country Hall and following the beautiful wooded valley of the river *** to **** (the old Fishing Lodge of the **** Estate) and into the seaside town of ****. Discover what happened on the eventful night of the great flood when the whole town was devastated by the floodwaters. This fascinating walk can be shortened to take half a day if required. Many themes can be studied along the way including formation of landscape, rivers, woodland ecology, local history, cliff railway in ****, 'overland launch' story.

If you would like to study this in more detail as part of your KS2 geography curriculum please ask us about more specific fieldwork opportunities.

Centre Based Activities

Ropes adventure course

All pupils whatever age enjoy the challenge of the Wild Country Hall ropes course. An ideal way to start the week with the emphasis on personal challenge, pupils begin to believe that they can achieve.

Orienteering

With several courses ranging from photo and star courses around the grounds to the longer course up on the common adjacent to Wild Country Hall there is something to suit all ages and abilities. The session would

usually start in the classroom with an introduction to maps and progress outdoors when the pupils have mastered the skill of orientating and reading a map.

Survival game

A fast and furious game which introduces the concept of food webs. Pupils take on the roles of carnivores, herbivores, humans, disease and the elements and have to hunt food and water around the grounds to live.

Centre based Activities cont:

Pond Dipping and Mini Beast Hunting

Best done between Easter and October the grounds of Wild Country Hall are ideal to go on a mini beast hunt.

Armed with magnifying lenses and pooters the pupils will be amazed at what they can find right before their very eyes! The small pond also provides an opportunity to discover what insects live in this habitat. Useful comparison to rock pool habitat.

Climbing Wall and Climbing Poles

An ideal introduction to rock climbing in a controlled environment pupils will learn to combine personal awareness skills with the technical skills of climbing. There is a strong emphasis on teambuilding skills concentrating on trust, communication.

Zip Wire

Possibly one of the most memorable experiences! Everyone enjoys the Wild Country Hall zip, again the emphasis here being personal challenge.

Mountain Bikes

An opportunity to ride a mountain bike in the environment that they were designed to be used! The trails around the Lodge and the Common provide the ideal opportunity to learn some off roading and how to safely ride your bike in this terrain.

The Outdoor Business

A problem-solving day which combines all the old favourite Wild Country Hall team challenges e.g. the Problem Wall and Spaghetti Tangle with some new ones e.g. the Bridge of Sighs and Tyre Triangle. Each team takes control of its own day starting with a set amount of money in the bank. They must then choose a problem which they feel best suits their team strengths and set about trying to solve it. Good teamwork will be rewarded and the best Business is the team who has shown the best team attributes e.g. communication, support, encouragement etc. will have the most money in the bank at the end of the day.

Problems which can be included

Blow the whistle	Giants Finger
Balance beam	Hooky Colours
Tyre Triangle	Bridge of Sighs
Island Swap	Problem Wall
Spiders Web	Spaghetti Tangle
Silent Square	The Maze
Bridge The Gap	Stepping Stones
Rescue the Key	Sheep and shepherd
Zip wire	Spaghetti tangle

Bird of Prey Evening

Enjoy a fascinating evening with a local falconer and experience Birds of Prey at close quarters. Watch them fly across moors the grounds and the workroom and discover amazing facts like exactly why they have amazing eyesight, how they fly and use their talons to catch their prey. Sid and Dawn usually bring along Falcons, an Eagle owl, a Harris hawk and a barn owl, but this does vary.

Additional charge of £80.00

We have a variety of other activity days specially designed for groups with special needs. If you would like more details of these please do not hesitate to contact us.

3.1.2 Individual child tracking sheet.
Pre Course Profile

Name:

Wild Country Hall Outdoor Education Centre
Individual Development Profile

School _____ Name _____ Year _____

Date _____

	Caring and Sharing <i>Being a Social Being</i> <i>Adventure For life</i> <i>Making the future</i> <i>Risky Business</i> <i>Packing the Sac</i>	Progress against targets set	Targets for tomorrow
Monday Activity Staff			
Tuesday Activity Staff			
Wednesday Activity Staff			
Thursday Activity Staff			
Friday Activity Staff			

3.1.3 Introduction to the school Lesson Plan on Wild Country Hall Learning Goals.

Wild Country Hall Learning Goal Lesson Plan

Introduction

- If you have been to Wild Country Hall before you will be aware that over the past few years we have been introducing our 6 Learning Goals on a Monday afternoon.
- If you haven't visited us before our Learning Goals are the underlying principles that underpin every aspect of each residential visit and will be introduced, developed and reinforced during your Wild Country Hall Experience. These are fundamentally linked to the National Curriculum.
- They will form the basis for the week and all the things the students will learn about themselves, the activities and others. On a Friday we revisit the Learning Goals and review exactly what the students have learnt from their experiences.
- As a centre we are constantly evolving, and to improve the students understanding and also the time restraints of a busy Monday we would appreciate it if you could set aside some time in the week before you come – maybe last thing Friday afternoon - to introduce our Learning Goals. We envisage this should take about an hour and hopefully should be an interesting preparation for their week.
- This lesson does require you to have some prior knowledge and understanding of our Learning Goals which if you have visited us before should not be a problem. If you are new to our Learning Goals and would like to discuss them in a bit more detail your Wild Country Hall Course Director would be happy to do this – just ask.
- Obviously you may have your own ideas of how you would like to run this session which is great – just let us know how it went and share your ideas with us!

3.1.4 Happy hour duties.

HAPPY HOUR DUTIES

	Servers	Sandwiches	Bootroom & Corridor	Lounge, Classroom & Minibus	Eco-Warriors
Monday	A				
Tuesday	E	A	B	C	D
Wednesday	D	E	A	B	C
Thursday	C	D	E	A	B
Friday	B	C	D	E	A

3.1.5 The Wild Country Hall head's letter to schools enlisting their participation in an evaluation of the centre's work.

Dear Teacher

Wild Country Hall is undertaking a long term investigation to assess what impact a residential experience can have on it's participants. To help us with this investigation could you select 3 pupils from the party coming to Wild Country Hall? The criterion for selection is entirely up to you. At the end of each day's activity staff will comment on the enclosed pro-formas on how the pupil has made progress against 3 of our learning goals that will be introduced to the group at the start of the course. On the reverse of the sheet and in preparation for the visit, could you write a brief introduction about the selected pupils on how they are in school, both academically and socially?

I have enclosed details of Wild Country Hall's 6 learning goals for your information. We will be concentrating on 3 of these as per the pro-forma.

The completed document is providing all concerned with a very pertinent and useful document evidencing progress through the week and exactly what benefits a residential outdoor experience can have.

In preparation for your visit it would be helpful if you could split the party into 3 activity groups of mixed gender and ability. When doing this could you ensure that the 3 children we are focusing on are in different groups?

I apologise that this initiative is yet more paperwork but these are the times we live in!

Thank you very much for your co-operation and we look forward to meeting you.

Pete Bromley
Head of Centre

3.1.6 Extracts from children's writing.

Pupils aged 10/11 from a school in North Devon were taken by their teacher to ***** for a day/evening in 2007 Supplied by one of the ***** instructors [Names removed]

Waterfall climbing

When I went to ***** we climbed a waterfall (stream) I was at the back and ** was in front of me, ** slipped on a rock and looked as if she was ice skating It was funny, I avoided that ** was leading us, we all got a chance at being leader, which was telling the scout when they couldn't see the tale end ** The scout led the way and the tale end ** made sure no-one fell behind. Before we got to the stream we had to slide down a hill on our bums I had a fantastic time and I wish I could go again

On Thursday we went to ***** it was brilliant We made a huge fire and cooked marshmallows, they tasted absolutely lovely ** was cooking a marshmallow on the biggest fire of them all when she tripped over and nearly fell in the fire, it was hilarious Everyone laughed and tried to help her up ** got the marshmallow on the stick and chucked it in We went on the zip wire, it was fantastic We sat in a tent while we waited our turn ** was being silly on the zip wire and she was screaming all the way down My wellie nearly fell off

On the first day of our visit to ***** we went to our room and we got dressed Then we got our waterproofs and went to the slide which went underground

We then climbed across the low rope course, and moved on to the little zip wire which went from one tree to another We then went to have our lunch

After lunch we went on a walk, we had to wear helmets because we slid on our bottoms down a steep path On the way back we went up a waterfall and got soaked. When we got back we changed our clothes and had dinner Next we went for a night walk on the moor We went through the heather and I fell over When we got back we went to bed

In the morning when we got out of bed we had breakfast, we had cereal then we had waffles, sausages and baked beans I had a drink of water and tea After breakfast we did orienteering, we had a map compass paper and a pen We had to find a shape and copy it.

We had to light a fire and the snow came down and it was freezing We went on the zip wire, it was big and Mrs W took a picture of me Then we had lunch, it was soup and bread After lunch we went on the rock climbing wall and I climbed to the top, I was really pleased

Fire Lighting

On the second day of ***** we did fire lighting, but it was only half of us because the other half did it the day before.

Our group had to split into teams of 2 or three. I was with **. and **. ** and I went to find materials while ** waited to build it. We brought back sticks, big and small.

After a while we had made part of our fire. We had to make it by using little sticks, leaves and dried fern. We also started to make a pyramid around it. Soon we had all finished making our fires, now it was time to light them.

We got a piece of paper each to put anywhere on the fire, ** did ours. Then we had to try and light them. None of our fires lit so our group leader ** gave us some top tips. We then tried to light the fires with different fire lighters. We also got some metal polish because it lights really well. Finally our fire lit. We had to find a stick with a bit of a pointed tip so that we could stick a marshmallow on the end. We then held them over the fire until they turned golden brown. They were absolutely delicious because they were crusty on the outside and all soft and sticky on the inside. I think fire lighting was one of the best things on the trip!

Night walk

When we went to ***** Lodge we went on a night walk up on the moors. It was really fun because we had to walk through all of this heather and it was really dark. After a little while we stopped at a stone and ** told us about something that had happened there. We carried on walking for a little while then we stopped again and sat down ** told us a story about a ship of bones. When he finished we walked back, we were tired by the time we got back. It was really fun at ***** Lodge.

Thank you for taking us.

The climbing pole

When I went to ***** I climbed up the climbing pole. I climbed 3 quarters of the way up the climbing pole but my hands were freezing because it was cold so I had to come down. Then I sat down in my harness, held the rope and bounced down the pole. When I got down Miss G lent me her gloves to warm up my hands. Next ** went up and she got a quarter of the way and then it was **'s go to climb the pole. ** got halfway up the pole..

Fire Building

It was the second day of our ***** visit and we had just split into 2 groups. One group went to the zip wire; our group had gone to build fires. ** had given us ten minutes to get some sticks to build our fire. We were in groups of three; I was with ** and **. While we were doing that ** had gone to get some matches and half a piece of paper for the groups to use. When he got back he called all the groups together, we took it in turns to light our fires and see if our fires kept going. It turns out that none of our fires kept going. So we had another ten minutes to prepare while ** went to get some more materials. When he got back he showed us how to use these other materials,

he also used different ways of lighting a fire without matches. One way was to rub 2 bits of metal together, the other way was to push down and pull up your hand many times on a rubber cutting shaped like a tube, with a metal stick inside you had to do this on your already built fire. We had a go with at least one of the fire lighters, when all the fires were going we toasted marshmallows on sticks

When we got to ***** Lodge, it was amazing. We saw the rock climbing walls and the low ropes course. We walked into the lodge and ** talked to us about where our rooms were. When we were in our rooms we had to put our duvets on our beds ready for the night. When we did our first activity we saw the zip wire and the green slide, the zip wire looked huge, but fun. We had a little go on the slide before we went to our first activity.

The first activity was brilliant. We had to wear a helmet for safety, but that didn't matter. We were sliding down leaves and bushes. **, the man who was guiding us was funny and kind. When we were about halfway through the walk we stopped and talked about trees and plants. Then ** was pretending to be Christopher Columbus and we were the Santa Maria, the boat. So we were walking up a stream, some bits were deep and some were shallow. When we got to the end of the stream, everybody had water in their wellies. We started walking back to the lodge; the whole walk took us about 2 hours.

3.2 Extracts from interviews.

3.2.1 Interview with Head Teacher, June 2008.

Interview with head teacher, June 2008 [some names have been changed or removed].

Tony How long have you been taking groups to Wild Country Hall?

HEAD TEACHER I have been trying to work that out recently, I think its 18 years.

Tony What were the biggest changes you have seen over 18 years?

HEAD TEACHER Principally in the residential aspects, what the children began were doing when we began going there, they were expected to do the washing up, most of the cleaning throughout the centre. But now health and safety has restricted that quite severely. The cooking and washing up is now done in the kitchen. Children are not allowed in the kitchen. The quality of the clothing that is provided, the protective clothing has improved out of all proportion. Its unrecognisable now, it was fairly primitive when we first started. Most children still brought their own wellies and waterproofs, if they brought waterproofs at all, they brought them. But the coats they were more like oilskins. The opportunities to travel have improved with the 3 mini buses, but they've shortened the distances considerably. They're a bit more conscious of the amount of petrol they consume so they look for opportunities closer to home. Where we would have travelled to Croyde to climb at *** point and surfing *** Bay, now they go closer to home, to ***. Ahr, so they've cut down on the travel. Much less extravagant. Climbing tends to be in grounds now, as well, because there

has been quite a bit of erosion on the north Devon cliffs which has stopped us going out as much as we would have liked to.

Other than that the biggest changes will be on the learning objectives side, identifying links with the national curriculum, looking for opportunities to teach, particularly PSHE (personal social and health education) personal development. The kind of challenge they tend to set now is much more intellectual when they go to things like the outdoor business, which requires a considerable amount of input from all the children and very intense thinking time spent, because time is very, very short that they're offered for each of the challenges and its essential that they share and they plan and that somebody is elected from the group to make decisions.

Tony So would it be fair to say that that change came in along with the national curriculum?

HEAD TEACHER No. It came, it came in as there were more demands from the local authority to justify spending the money to support them, the centres. The centres had to sell themselves, and they had to sell themselves as educational establishments in order to within fit the parameters that the local authority were putting. They had to find ways of convincing head teachers that it wasn't just a holiday for ? They had to look at what learning opportunities they were offering and how those actually contributed to development of national curriculum, so the national curriculum's existence was in a way a good, supportive tool for centres when they were looking for ways to explain to schools what they could do.

Tony So, to be clear (outlines beginning briefing session on learning goals) ...

HEAD TEACHER It gets more intense than that, if a school has said it wants a week that focuses on writing, writing from experience or empathetic writing they will still go through the learning goals but will say we are particularly focussing on this one, the reason is because your school wants you to do this by the end of the week. So they can adapt that presentation to fit with what the schools' expectations are.

Tony So before they did that, how would they have started the week's sessions?

HEAD TEACHER Well, very much the same but they didn't have the identified learning goals. The talk would have been much the same, their activities, experiences encouraging people to share to work together to support one another, when somebody has a skill to make best use of it. And explain what challenges were, who was there to support them. It was much the same but much clearer now. Much more clearly identified learning goals.

Tony Please summarise the benefits and the gains for children.

HEAD TEACHER One of the major ones is the residential experience. Getting out. Living together as a group and being away from home. Learning that independence and what it is like to share with other people. Learning to accept that other people have rights and priorities may sometimes be given to other rather than themselves. Learning some self sufficiency skills. Particularly self stuffiness skills in the case of some children who have been looked after, waited on hand and foot all their lives. Getting out into the great outdoors. I can't explain just how much I think that is important, even to children like these who live in the heart of the country, who rarely set foot outside their houses at home, other than to go to an organised football

match, or to go to their clubs or to do something. They just don't go out, they don't look. Having instructors down there who spend time explaining what the environment is, how it's been shaped, what the different features are, what animal might have caused this particular thing. We've taken them lambing now, for a few years and it always comes as a shock to me to find so many of them who've been to this school who've been lambing when they're five, who've forgotten and find it such an exciting adventure.

Taking them out on those canoes, on the lake. It's a real experience, even for the most confident of those children. It's the first time they've had to rope boats together. First time they've been independently, well not totally independently, actually expected to manage the movement of something like that without somebody helping them. Surfing, the kind of... I think you were there and experienced the Beach Olympics, which is seriously challenging, ha, ha, ha seriously challenging, but endurance, not wanting to go to the toilet every five minutes, being actually able to prepare themselves for a day out so they get their kit together, get their lunch together they pack it all and they're responsible for packing. Building up these children's characters and their sense of self-worth, responsibility, experiencing challenges which frighten them, but that they are able to get over, see the other side of this, experience the real thrill of doing something that created a sense of danger, things which I don't think we can offer enough of just by doing things in school. Tony, you talked about two things, the adventurous activities and the residential experiences. I don't know if it is significant that you chose to speak about the residential aspects first?

HEAD TEACHER: It is. It is.

Tony: Do you think, then, that you could achieve the same gains on a residential that didn't have those same outdoor challenging activities? Like a trip to EuroDisney?

HEAD TEACHER: I would have said no, because part of the experience is the anticipation of new and exciting events, part of the thing that gets them is that there is a certain fear of the next day, the unknown, certainly. It's not high level but they are worried. They are, they know they are going to be challenged and they do talk about things and sometimes they over-sell the difficulties to each other and they know that when they go out the next day they will be doing something, at least one thing that have never done before. And that creates a whole different empathy within the group. It can't be replicated just by going on a residential visit to somewhere where you are not challenged. Can't be done. I've done both. I have an interesting moment when I interviewed some staff for one of the other outdoor centres, one of the questions I asked one of the people, who was very well prepared, was "if I was one of your students, should I feel fear before I start a new thing?" and it was interesting that only one said that she felt they should feel fear because she didn't feel it was a challenge, sufficient of a challenge. The other two were being, I think very health and safety conscious. And I think she's right, I think there should be some anxiety that concentration's needed knowing you're going to be doing something that... that's the bit I want to bring into these things. Not many of them have been

swinging from a rope twenty feet above the ground before, with just their own hand on, ha, ha, ha.

Tony Or holding their friend climbing on a wall?

HEAD TEACHER Yes. Or having to swing over an imaginary, or go down that zip wire, or get onto that surfboard. With waves crashing around, which for some of them who are used to swimming pools or Mediterranean ripples, but not the Atlantic coming in reasonable form.

Tony One of the things the children were keen to talk to me about was homesickness. How much do you prepare them for that before you go?

HEAD TEACHER To be honest, very little. Because the more you talk about it, the more they are going to feel it. So we always take them away with assurances, they know Jan is always round the corner. They know that were there they've known us for a long time. They usually year on year they will tell stories of the child who is homesick. We have both been used to sitting with a foot in the door of a dormitory reading a book while a child is being reassured that we are still there. Only once I think we've had an extreme case of homesickness when a child for most of the night demanded she go home. She got up next morning and you wouldn't have known she'd uttered a word during the night, she was straight into the activity. She did it again to us the second night. Third night she was so tired she slept and there wasn't a problem the rest of the week. When she got off the bus at the end of the week, she told her mum she had had a great week. No we don't prepare them for that because I think we could create images that I don't want to try to live up to. We deal with it when it happens. We don't let the parents ring them. We don't let them take mobile phones we try to avoid that. We also encourage the parents to write to them, on the second day normally they will get a card or a letter. Sometimes that generates tears and a bit of, you know, quite reflection. Generally it's worked really well.

Tony Correct me if I am wrong, you seem to be telling me homesickness is not a big problem. It happens and when it happens it is dealt with.

HEAD TEACHER Yes. But you see we're doing this as part of the residential and that separation from home is a unique experience in their lives and for some it is going to create a homesickness and we deal with it. And they deal with it. When they come away from Wild Country Hall they've dealt with it. Very few of them, in fact I can only think of one in all those years who didn't feel these were a problem anymore, and that was a recent one and she won't go back...but then, inside information tells me that child has been spoilt wherever they go she sits and is waited on hand and foot. She's a little treasure. And...is never expected to do anything for herself. I think the first time she goes away from is going to be a major shock to her. But she is the only one I can think of who hasn't come away and had no further problem. Done that, dealt with it. We're four away from home. And as we've explained to many of them, by the time they get here it will be daylight, you'll be up and into the activities...and you won't actually want them to take you home then. Generally that worked, but of we've had to we've sat on the floor with a foot in the door and crawled around the next day. It's something I think is inevitable to some degree and we deal with it when it happens.

Tony The centre has a menu of activities. How do you select? What guides you in your choice?

HEAD TEACHER That's what we were saying earlier on about the schools intention for the week. Mine is almost an entirely adventure week. And that I can do because I go during the vacation. So it doesn't intrude into any of my teaching weeks during the course of the academic year. So I pick a adventure week. Schools that are going down during the rest of the year may pick from their geography or their environmental study history topics and they have got ready made programmes and packages that you can use on them. So they've got the Lyn Valley trail which gives them modern history, environmental studies man's impact on the environment. All those things can be brought out. Its relatively easy to choose some topics from the curriculum leave them to the Wild Country Hall trip and ask the centre to plan around those needs. But to keep the adventure. My timetable is almost entirely adventure, but I try to include just one thing that would be (curriculum?) we either do the rivers or we do the coastal erosion topic from our water study. It isn't entirely fair on the children, but it does tick some boxes for the school.

Tony Is there anything else you want to tell me about the centre or how you feel the children have responded?

HEAD TEACHER In early October when I announce the dates of the Wild Country Hall trip and ask how many are interested, we are almost inevitable booked by the following Friday. The enthusiasm the children demonstrate for that trip is only generated by word of mouth of children who have been in previous years. It has never been undersold. We always have a waiting list, on occasions we have been allowed to over-fill the centre, I took 38 last time. but the enthusiasm those people down there show for their subject, the knowledge and the ability to challenge is what really inspires those children. And what I have said to the children at the end of the course is that they should be grateful for the time those people spend learning the skills they have because they are unique and that's something within the education of the centre, because they re all teachers, or trained as teachers and they all bring that aspect of their background and knowledge to the work they do at the centre. There's also something about the location the English coast. We had one particular year when the head of centre, ***, and I were sitting on a beach, a peculiarly rocky beach and we were explaining to them why they had to stay within the range we had given them. They couldn't believe that the tide rise on the north *** coast is between nine and 11 meters. Having showed them what nine meters looked like, they were terrified initially, but we explained that the tide comes in reasonably slowly, but it does come in sufficiently for us to be wary. We then started to talk to them about their previous holiday experiences and their seaside experiences, which takes me back to the remark I made about Mediterranean ripples, because these children we took that year, there were 28, 29 children, were sitting around us on the beach, both groups had joined together, *** said "how many of you have been to the seaside in England or Wales for a holiday?" and out of the group these wasn't a single one had spent a holiday on the English coast, none of them Had ever sat on rocks none had been in the environment we were in which is actually quite lonely,

quite isolated, and most wouldn't have considered sitting on a beach on a day like that one, with the clouds pretty low, it was actually touching Countesbury Hill, and enjoying themselves. Felling they were having a great time this is one of the things I don't think we sell hard enough to these children that you do not have to be lying on a sun longer with a disco blearing to be having a good time. There are things you can do and being out on an English coast as we were was something none of them had experienced before. And we still find a high percentage of our children never go unless we take the.

Tony One of the things I have noticed is how they respond to darkness.

HEAD TEACHER Yes. Now that's always the source of some excitement. When you stop, which we do most times (coming back from Lambing) and you look down that valley, you can only see a twinkle of lights way out on the ***, there's a light down below you in a house, and nothing else. It really does inspire a sense of awe. One of the Best nights we've had up on the moor, when we were coming back and realised the sun was just about to disappear and we made them just sit down in the heather and watch. There was total silence, absolute total silence even after the sun had disappeared...we talk about inspiring awe and wonder, that really was one of those moments. When you think someone's got the message here, little things that make it special that you can't do anywhere else.

3.2.2 Extracts from group interviews

Group interview four pupils, Rupert, Joe, Irina, Jody
Small School JULY 2005

Irina My mum said I'd changed when I got back from Wild Country Hall, said I was more helpful.

Tony right, what do you think?

Irina Scary. Because I laid the table, I don't know what came over me. I laid the table and I cleared it.

Tony when was that?

Irina when I got back from Wild Country Hall.

Tony for how long

Irina I still do it sometimes

Tony good, excellent.

Irina I don't clear it but, I leave it cleared

Tony (to Rupert) what about you, were you about to say...?

Rupert Yeah.

Irina and I wash my hair without asking

Rupert I wash even more, have a shower every day I normally have it every 2 days but now I have it every one day

Tony did your parents say anything?

Rupert yeah they said I changed as well

Tony did they? Did you go the year before?

Rupert yeah I've been twice

Irina mum said I was nicer and, I don't know what that means

Tony it means she missed you so much

Silence

Tony OK that's what your mum says What do you think?

Irina erm I don't know I think I've changed.

Tony how?

Irina well I never used to help, Sophie did all the helping Now I laid the table and wash my hair without asking And have a shower without asking

Tony what about the rest of you?

Irina and I .

Joe yeah I do things as well

Joe I'm just normal same as usual

Rupert Nobody's normal

Joe no, now I can make a dolphin noise Crraaaach, crraaaach!

Laughter

[I read the skedy cat narrative]

Irina How old were they?

Tony Same as you Year six Are you all the same age, all year six?

Jody I'm year five.

Tony lets think about parts of the story. What about missing mums and dads?

Irina I did

Rupert I did

Jody I cried every night

Rupert I did at bit at first, the very first time. 2 years ago

Irina When I was in the bus leaving them, I was...upset

Rupert I was laughing

Irina bit I wasn't really upset I was only upset for about ten minutes, and then I forget about Em for the whole...but when she sent me letters and when I read those....

Rupert you got embarrassed

Irina no

Tony (to Jody) how do you feel about it now? You said you had cried a little bit, how do you feel about that now?

Jody erm I feel OK now.

Tony so if you had the chance to go again would you say yes or no?

Jody I probably would go again because it was really fun and I probably wouldn't cry because I've already been there.

Tony to the Kirsty story what else did she say?

Jody she said she wasn't scared of the water any more...and she put her hand up more.

Tony anything else?

Jody she's become more confident...in herself.

Irina I nearly overcame my fear of spiders, I found one in the drawer.

Tony nearly, not quite

Rupert I found one in my bed

Irina also when I went there I, I, I be more friends with lots of people. Because I normally just like have Emily but I was friends with, at one point I was like friends with everybody. Not friends, but I was friendly with .

Tony has that lasted or was it just at the time?

Irina it helps, yes. And also when I got back from Wild Country Hall Sophie and my mum were nice to me, because they'd missed me so much.

Rupert so were my sisters!

Tony what do you mean it helps?

Irina well instead of only having special friends, I have very special friends, special friends and just friends.

Interview four pupils, Karl, Sam, Susan, Fatima
Small School 2 May 2006.

Sam When we was, erm, there was people in the dormitory they saw this man on the hill and they thought he had a gun and we started saying to Ricky, coz we had all our torches, and we started putting our fingers in front of the torches and he started crying and he ran off to Mr *** crying and we got into trouble for making him cry.

Tony What did Mr *** say to you?

Sam Erm he said stop making Ricky cry because you won't like it if somebody else tells you a scary story.

Susan outside the dormitory there was always like somebody doing like gardening or something, and we didn't know, oh it's real funny, we didn't know anyone was there and we had to get changed while he was outside.

Tony so I bet there were some people feeling pretty sleepy next morning then. .

All yeah, yeah

Fatima Lauren got up at ten past eight every morning, even though breakfast was at quarter past.

Susan I couldn't hardly get to sleep one night because everyone was making such a big noise. And then Fatima started saying these things, like "it's raining outside".

Fatima yeah I was really random.

Karl not the one we've just been to, but last year, Andrew got a bit upset.

Sam well Jim Bob was naked on top of the cupboard and ??WJ walked in.

Inaudible. Sam wants to tell a story that involves Fatima. She does not want him to as it is embarrassing to her.

Sam can I tell you a funny story now?

Tony "A" funny story?

Fatima no you can't

Tony no

Sam can I change the names?

Tony no, not that we know it would be embarrassing to Fatima.

Sam well can we tell you one day when she's not here?

Tony that's not fair is it?

Sam but then we can't tell anybody.

Tony Lets go back to the homesick thing. What I am interested in is are there any particular times when people get homesick?

Karl oh at night when they can't sleep, coz like they're not doing very much. They remember that they're missing their mum and dad and they start thinking about it. Coz I remember one night Mr *** was waiting in our dorm for about half an hour coz Andrew was crying. They should try not to think about their parents, not think about then. Just think about what they are going to do today and having fun.

Susan yeah, and you could like bring something from home like a teddy bear, or something like a picture to help you remember home.

Tony so you're saying different things?

Karl if you don't think about them you forget about them and....

Susan no, its nice to have a picture or a letter so you know nothing's happened to them and...

Fatima if you just forget about them then when you go back home you'll be like, who are they?

Karl you know your *parents*, come on... you're not going to forget them.

Susan I think its better to bring a picture

Karl but if you've never been away before and you bring a picture of your parents you're going to sit and look at it and start crying.

Susan but some people are more sensitive than others

Tony did anyone get a letter from home? Tell me about the letters

Susan it said they were all safe and things like that, it was quite nice to get a letter just to like erm, tell you. .yeah. And a picture, because erm, you can erm remember them And

Karl I got mine midweek It was funny coz my sister watches this programme every day she drew pictures of it and it was really funny. It made me feel they hadn't forgotten about me Made me feel happy

Sam I got a letter Wednesday.

Fatima I didn't get a letter they forgot me.

Susan it was very boring, (on the coach)

Sam we had to sing Irish songs

Fatima on the way back, yeahhh, *** made us

Sam on the way back we were singing all these different little songs We were hyper!

Tony was there any difference in how people were on the coach going and coming back?

Karl yeah, coming back everyone was more lively

Susan yeah, because I think that now they've all done it and now there happy . I don't know but their happy.

(When we arrived back at school ...)

Fatima my dad embarrassed me. He was like, "my little girl's back!" It was horrible!

Susan I kind of felt, erm, happy and sad.

Fatima yeah.

Karl I felt unhappy because I was looking forward to the rest of the holiday with nothing to do

Sam I was really annoyed because I had to see my brothers

Fatima you can't feel annoyed because no one's annoying you.

Sam because my little brother is so annoying.

Tony what do you think you learned at Wild Country Hall?

Karl how to be a team how to co-operate, things like that.

Susan we learned new skills.

Tony Like?

Fatima Packing the sac.

Susan yeah and like ???? canoes and things like that much more than RE; RE work...

Sam I leant a funny joke.

Tony tell me, tell me what packing the sac is Fatima.

Fatima its when your taking new skills that you've learnt back with you...

Tony can you tell me some?

Fatima ...erm, if you've done canoeing you're taking, well if you learned how to canoe properly, then when you go back, like, you can carry on like...

Susan yeah, but there is nowhere to carry on canoeing.

Tony exactly...so let's think about it a bit more widely. Is it just about doing exactly what we did there, bringing it back and doing it again?

All, mixed No, but..it could... it'll give us ideas to do...yeah, but we could...

Susan We can make erm, not do exactly the same things but, erm...like kinda use it to help you...

Tony like? What? What like?

Karl bringing back skills that we can use in other stuff here.

Tony Like?

Karl...maybe in PE or something; I don't know?

Susan It's like taking what you did there and remembering what you did there.

Tony when you said skills, that's a good word, but what do you think that means?

Susan erm things that you are able to do?

Tony so, canoeing, sharpening a pencil, writing, playing football All things we can do Do you think packing the sac can be other things rather than skills?

Karl yeah, like team work.

Tony That's a good one, team work I suppose you could say it is a skill, but you might say it's .

Sam helping each other?

Tony yes, Ok good, helping each other. I was going to say the word attitude. Have you come across that? Attitude? Like somebody's attitude towards something So what was your attitude when we were Pirate boating, Susan?

Susan I didn't really know where to go at all.

Tony OK. That's not your attitude, you just didn't know. What was your attitude?

Susan well, I wasn't very confident

Tony you weren't, but did that mean you gave up? What did you do?

Susan I stopped. .wr????ing

Tony Stopped worrying or stopped rowing?

Susan No, rowing!

Tony and did you just give up (being Pirate Captain)?

Susan no, I still tried

November 2004.

prior to the activity. As he had no partner, BoyX and I shared a board. BoyX confessed he was a little frightened of going too deeply into the water. We went in to his belly.

made a great deal of progress. The surf, eventually managing to stand on the board 3 or 4 times, keeping balance and moving into the beach. Mark was very pleased with his

progress and performance, saying that he would, given the opportunity, have a go at surfing again. I am interested to know how this may have affected his self-esteem and ~~trans~~ self-efficacy and how this affects other aspects.

e.g. When listening to explain how waves are formed (at the start of the activity, BT going into the water / Mark was fiddling playing sand castles. BT when Leader explaining how to stand on the board

(Following a session in the water learning to lie on the board on surf) BoyX was very much more attentive.

points to note:-

1. Not all of the group were attentive 2nd time (some were told off by leader.)

• BoyX may just have been more interested

• Or he may have been more motivated by his earlier success.

February 2005

② Day - In Beach Adventure.
 BoyX. Was singing to himself as he walked along down road to farm. Fell over a lot - happy about this. Fell out with BoyY. "what ??", Swoosh lands over head and told him off + that he would miss activity on beach. Grouchy about this, didn't join in wood collecting. Got fired on way back - falling over not happy. Looking around with Boy2 + Boy3. Got worried from dinner + denied sweet. Then got put on own in staffroom for being rude to ---

① BoyX not good. Noddy. Throws toys out of the pram (ASS.) Moved to Suburbia Row, only @ Sept this academic year, from Windale(?) school in CITY.

③ BoyX Was talking about days made for trees - "Can you make wood from leaves?" - Boy2
 "I can't do it" - open bottom door, eat lunch with dirty hands, get top off in the box, climb up wall, get down the wall. Get up slope on Glen More, get down slope on Glen More.

④ "When the fire gets to the sea it will explode and blow up the planets Venus and Mars and planet GirlX (GirlX is a girl on the course. GirlX - "quiet, not noticed girl") according to C. ass.